

Learners Support Services in Ethiopia: A Case Study of University of Gondar, Ethiopia

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Abstract: Discussing about general educational system, distance education system and how to provide support services to the learners. Taken case study of University of Gondar Library System, Gondar, Ethiopia. The organizational structure of the Library, its functioning, collection development, staff structure and different types of Library Services. Discussed about old and new organizational structure of the library. Digitization and its importance for the development of the library. The library was established in 1945 with the ‘Gondar College of Medical Sciences (GCMS)’. In this paper, I have discussed about inception of the library, the nature and objectives of the library, different activities of the library like, collection development, services, library automation, library organization and administration, different databases of the journals, different services-online services, reference services, library network services. UOG Library system has its own place in the development side still it has to overcome some of the problems concerned with acquisition and technical sections, lack of professional training skills, proper circulation and reference sections, sufficient training in automated services, depends upon budget constraints, and competition with wide group of users. It is observed that, UOG Library system can come over by these hurdles, it can be able to provide better support services to the regular as well as extension, continuing and distance learners. Through building its services continuously, extending its range of information resources, and introducing customized and innovative services, the Library is trying to meet and anticipate the imperatives of the University’s mission and corporate objectives.

Key words: Digitization, Distance Education, Library and Documentation Service, Open Learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this modern technological age, distance education plays a vital role in the present educational system. The revolution in Information and Communication Technologies, social demand for education for all and the need for lifelong and continuing education has resulted in the emergence of ‘Open Learning’ as a new quality (Carr, 2007). Open and distance learning as a mode in the process of educational transformation. Open and distance learning has been described more and more as learner centered than teacher oriented. Depends upon the requirements, it is the learner who has to take educational initiation than the teacher concerned. In this process he has to make his own efforts apart from the print media provided by the concerned authorities. Here comes the role of ‘Library Support Services’ (Budd, 1998). Any library will play an important role in fulfilling the objectives of its university (Carr, 2007; Elizabeth, 1998). This paper is a case study of University of Gondar (UOG), Ethiopia. An attempt has been made to discuss in detailed about different aspects of the UOG Library System, its Supporting Services and emphasis on the University’s distance education system along with its conventional education.

II. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

University of Gondar (UoG, 2004; ACRL, 2018)

The UOG is expected to play a leading role in the socio-economic development of the region and the Nation. From 2004 to date, the university has been doing well producing disciplined professional, conducting researches and delivering the required services to the community. Currently more than 19,000 students are undertaking their tertiary level education under regular, extension and distance education programs in the various disciplines. The university is providing extension and distance education through different departments –

- The Department of Marketing management – graduate level.
- PG Program in Bio-Technology (Full time study –it may require three years to complete for Part-Time students- summer class).
- The Department of Information technology – educating and training UG students in regular, extension and summer programs. Plans are going on for PG level also.
- Department of Anthropology also offering Extension courses at PG level.
- Department of Economics is offering extension courses at PG level.

Continuing & distance education

The main purpose of Continuing & Distance Education is to increase access to education and to reach out the public at large. The Office for Continuing & Distance Education (CDEO) shall place excellence in the pursuit of the University’s three-fold mission: education, research and service to the public. It shall make use of credit and non-credit courses or alternative methods of knowledge transfer to enable students to become more competitive in employment and personal enrichment through the use of innovative technology and quality customer service.

The Office for Continuing & Distance Education (CDEO) shall have the duties and responsibilities like – strategic planning for CDEO of the university by identifying the educational needs of the public and private sectors; provide part-time, on-the-job and/ or on-the-spot education and facilitate lifelong learning by overcoming barriers of time and distance through the use of appropriate media of communications such as correspondence, internet, interactive video and others; develop collaborative programs with the business community, industry, government agencies and non-profit corporations to enhance economic development and the quality of life; improve the quality of education by tapping the best global academic resources, etc.

III. RESULT

History of UoG library system

The Library System was established in 1945 to serve the students of the Public Health and Training Center in the then Gondar College of Medical Sciences (GEMS). In 1978, when GCMS was established, the GCMS Library was also redesigned in the Organization, Manpower and Reference Collection. Till then Library was intended to serve for Medical Doctors, Nurses and students of Environmental Science Department and Research Scholars. Along with the transformation of the College into the University, during 2004, a number of Branch Libraries were emerged together with the expansion of different departments/schools in the university.

Under the UoG Library and Documentation System, there are five branch libraries are working:

1. The College of Medical and Health Science (CMHS) Library, G. C. Campus.
2. The Humanities and Social sciences Faculty and the Law School Library, Maraki Campus.
3. The Natural and Computational sciences, and the Veterinary Faculties and Faculty of Business and Economics Faculty Libraries, Tewodros Campus.
4. The School of Technology Branch Library, Atse Fazil campus, and
5. Meles Zenawi Campus Branch Library (for Faculty of Agriculture)

The main Objective of the Library and Documentation Service is ensuring the Library’s collections and services meet users’ needs and are accessible for all users including regular, extension and distance mode and will support diversity represent best practices and enable the library to offer optimal service.

The existing system of Library and Documentation service perform different activities like cataloguing and classification, acquisition, circulation, check point, internet service, loan service, spot reading, periodicals, binding, book store are the major activities.

There are different factors hampering the growth and progress of the Library System, which includes:

- Lack of professional staff
- Ineffective implementation of the library system legislation promotion
- Lack of proper organizational structure
- Lack of proper library building and space problem, and
- Lack of technological knowhow for the purpose of library automation including digitization of the library

There was a committee established with five members to study the need for new existing Library and Documentation System and submitted a draft proposal. According to that committee,

The New Library and Documentation Service structure is:

Teaching Learning Core Process
 | *Technical Service Team*,
 Library and Documentation service Director | *Branch Libraries*,
 | *Administrative Support Team*.

Branch Libraries consists of: ----- | Binding,
 | *Book Store*,
 | *Periodical and Documentation*,
 | *Reference and Ethiopian collection*,

| *Lab Technical,*
| *Circulation Check Point,*
| *Loan and Stack desk.*

Technical service team consists of: ----- | *Cataloguing and Classification,*
| *Acquisition,*
| *IT and Automation.*

IT and Automation consists of: ----- | *Digital Library and System Development,*
| *Audio Visual and Multimedia Production,*
| *Network and Training.*

Staff pattern

The University Library shall be headed by Director appointed from academic staff. The Director is having full responsibility for the overall development of the Library. The Library and Documentation Service of UoG shall be organized by both academic and administrative staff.

It is proposed that the university Library System consists of three teams: Administrative Support team, Technical service Team and the Public Service Support team. Each teams will be headed by one team leader along with some supportive staff to look after the concern work in that team.

The Library IT and Automation work process team is responsible for the efficient utilization of ICT in the library system. It comprises Digital Library and System Development, Network and Training, Audio Visual and Multimedia Production. Digitizing resources has different significance not only for the library services but also for other purposes. It helps preservation of cultural value, facilitate and promote distance learning and e-learning, accessibility of remotely reserved resources and the like. Coordinator for digitization will look after concerned duties. Each section will be headed by concerned coordinators along with some support staff members to look after the section work.

The Binding section will be responsible for rebinding worn out and mutilated books and non -book materials. University library is providing electronic service to users and organize e-journals from different sources. The reference and Ethiopian collection is responsible for guiding orienting and equipping users in the skill of information searching documentation of local press.

Collection development in the library

The Main Library of UOG has over 100,000 collections which concerns the purpose of service. The collections are in English language, collected from India, United States of America and other countries. This collection includes micro form formats, serial titles and also e-resources. The newly built Main Library located at the CMHS Campus, with two floors with a study space and seating for 500 students. The Library comprises one of the largest collections of scientific, health, business and computer science materials from East Africa. More than 5,000 volumes are added annually. Over 7,000 active print serial titles are held in the Library.

The Library's Current Sources of Collection includes:

- ❖ Purchase
- ❖ Donations include
 - The Carter Center (UNID)
 - CODE Ethiopia
 - Book AID International
 - Amhara Development Association (a local non-government organization)
 - American Professional Health Organization (APHO)
 - International Livestock and Research Institute
 - Association for higher Education
 - British Council

A good Reference Collection contains Encyclopedias, Subject Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, Statistics, Legal References, multiple volume sets of literary criticism, medical References and so on.

Application of Technology

It is one of the first 'Open Access' library in Ethiopia. Library makes use of Library of Congress Classification and Anglo-American Cataloguing Code. Currently using 'Electronic Library Management' (ELM) System. The software is purchased from New Zealand in cooperation with the Canadian Embassy of University of Gondar (UOG) and through the cooperation of Volunteer Service overseas (VSO) which provide an experienced librarian

Mrs. Shirley Lewis to help the staff to work through all stages of automation. Internet access to over 10,000 electronic journals, electronic books, video Programs, e-learning Programs, slide Images, Track music and also many hours of spoken word.

Circulation collection contains books and videos that can be checked out. They are arranged on the shelves according to subject wise with the Call Number. The UOG Library's Media collection contains CDs, DVDs, Tapes and other non-print items. They cannot be checked out, but can be used in the Library at media stations.

Library Services

The Library provides 16 hours service along with a wide range of library resources and services, via the library homepage. Users can access through:

- the library's Online Public Access catalogue (OPAC),
- electronic, Video- on- demand Service,
- digital images on line audio libraries,
- e-learning programs by integrating the library system with international e-resource organizations,
- electronic journals, and a broad range of abstract and full text database tools online or on CD-ROM,
- To provide the State-of-the Art tools for its users to search for information they need, over 10 desktops are going to be installed in the near future.
- To facilitate the use of networking system in the library and Faculties, a fixed Local Area Network (LAN) units are installed throughout the library.
- The Library provides Literature search Service
- Bibliographic services
- Documentation services
- Reference and Information Services, and
- Automated library Services through internet, etc.

Facilities in the library

The UOG Library system is open for 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week to extend its services and increase its accessibility of information sources and services to the users at all levels. These current services and facilities include:

- Electronic Journals Service
- Automated Circulation Service
- OPAC Service
- Spot reading Service

The Library has its active role in cooperation with 39 Journal databases. It has developed network with those Journal databases. It is an active member in Consortium of Ethiopian Academic and Research Libraries (CEARL).

IV.CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can say that since its establishment, the Library is supporting the university to bring excellence in academic, research and community services (Aina, 1981) through the provision of access to knowledge, information sources and services that fits the needs of its diverse user community (Edoka, 2000). Even though the UOG Library system has its own place in the development side still it has to overcome some of the problems concerned with acquisition and technical sections, lack of professional training skills, proper circulation and reference sections, sufficient training in automated services, depends upon budget constraints, and competition with wide group of users. If the UOG Library system can come over by these hurdles, it can be able to provide better support services to the regular as well as extension, continuing and distance learners. Through building its services continuously, extending its range of information resources, and introducing customized and innovative services, the Library is trying to meet and anticipate the imperatives of the University's mission and corporate objectives.

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