

Role of Academic Libraries in the E-learning Environment



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ABSTRACT

There is a trend in universities to utilize e-learning to improve quality of learning activities of campus-based students. The aim of the study was to explore the academic libraries role in e-learning environment. The objectives of the study were to find the Library and Information services provided by the library, assess the students' Information Literacy skills within electronic learning environment, find students', librarians', academic staff perception towards e-learning. The study population consisted of three categories: students, librarians and lecturers. Three separate questionnaires were administered and a total of two hundred and seventeen responded to questionnaires. Interviewing was additionally used to collect data from the librarians. There are differences between lecturers' and librarians' perception on librarians' role in e-learning environment. The study identified six main roles and nine supportive roles for librarians to play in e-learning environment as perceived by both librarians and lecturers. Students' understanding of limitations of search engine, journal articles, Boolean operator 'AND' and evaluation of web documents were in a satisfactory level. Lecturers suggest academic libraries to be digital libraries for a quality e-learning system. Overall students have enjoyed learning online but prefer hybrid courses to fully online courses in the future. It was found that the availability of computer facilities effect the perception of impact of e-learning on studies. Degree enrolled and availability of Internet facilities do have statistically significant effect on the perception of features of e-learning. Ownership of a computer has statistically significant effect on the perception of interaction while gender, time spent on Course Management System, place of stay and ownership of a computer effect on the perception of satisfaction of e-learning. It was recommended for librarians to act mainly as educators, learning object librarians, custodians, managers and preserver/archivist and policy makers and acting as administrators, facilitators, information brokers, specialist advisors, evaluators, technology application leaders, counselors, metadata librarians and collaborators in ancillary capacity. Improvement of Information Literacy skills of the students is essential and recommended integration of Information Literacy programmes with Course Management Systems. Integration of electronic library information services with Course Management Systems was suggested as lecturers perceive sufficient access to learning resources could be a key enabler in increasing use of e-learning. Further research for finding students', lecturers' and librarians' perceptions of e-learning were recommended.