

Contribution of library in the ranking of university

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ABSTRACT

Academic library is known to be the heart of university, where the knowledge of the university's are collected, classified and preserved and later disseminated to the right user at the right time for the right reason. The scholarly roles (teaching, research, information consulting and publishing) of the academic librarian are the main advocates to the knowledge production which will influence the ranking of university. Therefore, Malaysia needs a guideline for scholar librarian to support continuous knowledge production. The aim of the paper is to discuss the conceptual framework of a study on scholar librarian and knowledge production as it will show the contribution of library in the ranking of university. The study will adopt quantitative research approach, which will involve academic librarians from five research universities in Malaysia. The paper will lead to construct an instrument and a model of scholar librarian.

Keywords: Academic libraries; Scholar librarian; Knowledge production

INTRODUCTION

Today, emphasis is being placed on research as the key for advancing the knowledge society and the knowledge economy. Consequently, research has moved high on the priority agendas for governments, government agencies and bodies devoted to this area, and of course, for universities. Academic library is acknowledged to be the heart of university, where the knowledge of the university is collected, classified and preserved and later disseminated to the right user at the right time for the right reason (Lombardi and Wall, 2006). Academic library has a close relationship with learning and research. In every research and teaching, the library is a necessary component because the researcher, teacher and students all need it to provide services in acquiring, storing and retrieving required information resources.

In all initiatives of university rankings, most indicators are about related to research and knowledge production. Some examples are Shanghao Jioa Tong use "research output"; THE-QS wants total outputs of research and research quality. The demands to improve the university ranking are felt by all staff in all universities. The technology is at best position which could make or break the initiatives done by the researchers. New best practices, business models, innovations, and strategies are emerging, including new ways to acquire, assimilate, and share knowledge. Using technologies that are already developed or that will be deployed over the next five years, best practices in knowledge sharing not only are diffusing rapidly but will be

substantially reinvented in all settings: educational institutions, corporations, government organisations, associations, and nonprofits. But universities are in a unique position to benefit from an added opportunity: providing leadership in knowledge production.

The scholarly roles (teaching, research, information consulting and publishing) of the academic librarian are the main advocates to the knowledge production which will influence the ranking of university. In a survey done by Hazelkorn (2007), university leaders believe rankings help maintain and build institutional position and reputation; good students use rankings to 'shortlist' university choice, especially postgraduates; and key stakeholders use rankings to influence their decisions about accreditation, funding, sponsorship and employee recruitment. Respondents say 'reputation derived from league tables is a critical determinant for university applicants'. Hazelkorn (2007) also found that 50% universities use the rank for publicity purposes, in press releases, official presentations and their website.

The ranking of university, even though only study of perception, is important factor for prospective students in choosing university. As many other nations, Malaysia wants to lure international students to study in their countries, thus Malaysia needs a better ranking among the world universities. It is thus therefore needs a guideline for scholar librarian to support continuous knowledge production. Libraries have for centuries played an important role in supporting research into all subjects and disciplines. The intensity is more in the last decades; the research sector worldwide has been experiencing enormous changes driven by advances in information and communications technology (ICT). Furthermore, research is increasingly characterized by national and international multi-disciplinary collaboration – as what Gibbons et al. (1994) called it as Mode 2 knowledge production. This development in the knowledge production has also brought about a significant change in the relationships between researchers and libraries.

Lougee (2002) noted that the past two decades have been a time of tremendous social, economic and institutional change for universities, including academic libraries. While responding to the unprecedented development of technology, colleges and universities have also addressed issues of social relevance, accountability, diversity, and globalization. But, nothing compared to the university ranking efforts, and because academic libraries support all sectors of academic life, they reflect a situation where knowledge production issues converge.

McMillan (2000) observes that the librarian 'makes a significant contribution, often defining the search, honing the researcher's goals, and helping the researchers to understand their needs'. Wood and Walther (2000) also noted that rather than rendering the librarian obsolete, 'the digital revolution has made librarians all the more essential'. Hawkins (1998) observed that as the information explosion continues, everyone will need more help finding, sorting and filtering the available material. There are efforts done by many university libraries in UK and Malaysia by adding a new department in their organization structure. Tables 1 show some examples from UK. Data are extracted from their websites.

Table 1: List of University with the Post

University	Date of creation	Post
Kingston University Library	2001	Research Support Librarian
London School of Economics	2000	Research Support Librarian
Salford University	1999	Research Co-ordinator
University College Worcester	1998	Research Support Co-ordinator
Manchester Metropolitan University	1995	Research Support Librarian

Comparatively, for universities in Malaysia, to date only three universities had created a department of “support research”. The respective university libraries did not changed their post but they have a department called “Research Support Department”. These university libraries are Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi MARA.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Newman, et al. (2001) predicted that no profession would undergo more radical changes between 2000 and 2010 than the information profession. Lettis (2000) asserted that the paradigm for today’s library has shifted from the modes of gathering, collecting, and protecting data to the modes of choosing, evaluating, organizing, and distributing information for maximum sharing potential. Now, librarians need to be more businesslike, collaborating with business colleagues and IT professionals; capitalizing on innovation for growth and expansion; adding value to information through filtering, synthesizing, messaging, and packaging; and, using business metrics for proving value and worth.

Teaching Role

Boyer (1997) defined teaching as “developing, testing and improving pedagogical techniques to meet the library’s role in teaching people to be independent scholars; exploring the effectiveness of online tutorials; best practices in Web design; and student learning styles related to a variety of techniques”. ‘Teaching’ skill is important for librarian-client relationship and successful marketing of library services to stakeholders (Kassel, 2002).

Young (2008) describes an academic librarian serving as an undergraduate academic advisor; teaching and introducing students to services designed to help them be successful to identify, access, and evaluate information and research sources and apply that process to their learning. Knowing how undergraduates understand information use allows educators to create enhanced learning environments. The skill of information literacy among academic librarian actually will enhance the other skills such as teaching, information consulting and research, which are very much needed skills to have in order to increase satisfaction among researchers.

Research Role

A knowledge production is a process and outcome of research. A research which is also an explicit communicable knowledge aimed to be disseminated to a wider audience (Gibbons et al, 1994). In a research, collaboration and networks is naturally favoured by research networks, is about formalised or informal patterns of transaction between research institution or researchers that enable facilitate or manage the production or application of knowledge (Gibbons et al. 1994 and Nonaka, 1994) refers research as a Meta skill process of acquisition which results in research papers or innovations such as patents or other explicit and communicable communication. Research results are related to learning and teaching of university, and for university to be a world class, research is a centre of any university activity (Nokkala, 2008). Libraries are becoming more involved in the creation and dissemination of knowledge. According to Rowlands (2003) research, scholarly communication, publishing strategies, bibliometrics and user studies are connecting the libraries to research. Lougee (2002) asserts that this is changing the very nature of the library. She offers examples of the new roles that a few libraries have taken on. She notes that some of these roles are extensions of traditional library activity, but also notes that wholly new functions and opportunities are emerging. Collaboration with new and diverse partners has become more important than ever; however, building effective collaborative relationships require far more than simply finding organizations that are willing to help the library do its work. Despite the evolution of library roles, Lougee (2002) aptly notes that the library keep distinct identity that holds special meaning for members of the academic community. As knowledge production is a teamwork effort, the number of research can be increased by including the academic librarian in the cycle of knowledge production. Academic librarian can do an advocacy role for them and increase the knowledge production. Research skill and knowledge are the essential tool kit for ensuring that libraries and librarians continue to effectively and efficiently meet the evolving needs of the clients and communities they serve.

In maintaining the roles played by academic librarians towards contributing to their university, Bourg, Coleman and Erway (2009) proposed that the job descriptions and qualifications of the librarians need to be re-evaluated to ensure that training and hiring encompass the skills, education, and experience needed to support new modes of knowledge production.

Information Consulting Role

Information consulting denotes a dynamic interactive process in which librarians are active, full partners with faculty and students facilitating teaching and research (Frank et al., 2001). They further noted that information consulting is essential to the success, lasting impact, and viability of academic libraries. They said, the current liaison programs, while helpful, are too passive and lack impact. Adcock et al (2006) defined, "consulting" as a supportive role of the academic librarian while "working with researchers". These academic librarians take initiative to develop proactive mentality anticipate faculty needs for example create position titles from liaison to consultant librarian (Donham and Green, 2004).

Academic library has been a central and important source of support for the university research community and will continue, to be in this important role. The collections and services of the academic library are keys to this supportive role. An information consulting work may be defined as when a librarians advice or assist on professional basis in identifying, defining and solving specific information problems involving the organisation, planning, direction, control

and analysing information . The consultant serves the academic libraries as an impartial, objective advisor.

Against this background, academic librarians have to use fresh approaches of alliance-creation and partnerships. They have to adopt new roles of diagnosis of service and information counseling on multifunctional project teams (Agada, 1997). Now, there are diverse demands for packaging and desktop delivery of information. Information centers have to deal with internal and informal knowledge by using new technologies and approaches. Most vital competencies in this area might be related to customer focus and information literacy.

Publishing Role

Publishing mean simply the communication and broad dissemination of knowledge, a function that has become both more complex and more important with the introduction and rapid evolution of digital and networking technologies. According to a study by Hahn (2008), at least 44% of 80 ARL libraries surveyed are involved in publishing, and another 21% are planning to get involved. That is 65% of the libraries surveyed (52 libraries). Library publishing services are developing in conjunction with a number of related services that are increasingly embedding library services more directly into the research process. The importance of library-publisher relationships should be viewed in the perspective of making it possible to publish without commercial publishers.

Academics now tend to distribute information directly over the network (electronic publishing), instead of disseminating their works through official publishing channels. Effectively, they act as institutional digital publishers by doing so. Academic libraries are well-placed to perform this function, since they are beginning to develop in-depth knowledge of the many technical and organisational issues involved in networking, and have experience in making library resources (e.g. catalogues) available over the network (McNeill, Haines and Carter, 2005). Publishing, in the traditional method, with paper correspondence, phone calls, publishing and distribution costs, would have been prohibitive. However, with the new technology of electronic publishing, it might be made much easier. The library seemed like a logical choice to doing publishing since it is the scholarship nexus of the college. Whatever happens, libraries and their users will become relatively less dependent on official publishers for satisfying their information needs.

In the case of Malaysia, the development of EJUM (Electronic Journal of the University of Malaya) is an online journal management system developed at the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, which currently hosts two journals; the Malaysian Journal of Computer Science and the Malaysian Journal of Library & Information Science. The hosting system has contributed to the enrichment of Malaysia's info-structure, building a corpus of refereed science and technology journals available over the Internet. It has the potential not only to stimulate collaboration among Malaysian and Asian scholarly publishers, but also to involve academic librarians to publish online (Zainab, Fong and Abrizah, 2005).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the study was to identify trends in scholarly roles of academic librarians and its relations towards knowledge production practices across the five Malaysian research universities in order to gain insight into importance and participation of academic librarians in

the four dimensions of scholarly roles; teaching, research, information consulting and publishing. In the end, the paper is about contribution of academic library towards its parent organisation, the university and its ranking.

The scholarly roles of academic librarians are related to the roles that “support the production of scholarly research”. Scholarly research is “a research which is academic, peer reviewed or refereed”. The academic librarian was always seen as the manager of information, but technology has made them changed. The researchers, mostly academicians are also teachers who may not have enough time to juggle, so academic library is the place where researchers ask for help in term of literature searching, and academic librarians become the centre point in their research projects. All this myriads of activities push academic librarian to be involved in the research projects, as empirical research is made of elements of searching and finding research topics, analysing literature-literature reviews, data analysis, writing research and later publishing it.

The scholarly roles are seen as roles emerging with the ICT and the university ranking era. Traditionally, academic librarian involved only after the research project has been published, thus only involved in acquiring it for collection development, cataloguing and classification, and circulating it to the researchers. This paper proposed that, to fulfil the scholarly roles, the cycle of work for academic librarian is getting longer and bigger. This role evolves because of the skills that academic librarian has; information literacy skill and hordes of other skills which are also needed by researchers. The new academic librarians are becoming scholar librarian. Scholar librarian, as a relatively new concept, belongs to librarians who are able to transgress and penetrate the need of the library user who are focusing on the scholarly research projects. The scholar librarian have these abilities: selecting and adjusting the information investigation and research project tasks, and practicing scientific research very well. In this paper, the scholarly roles are; teaching, research, information consulting and publishing. Below is the conceptual framework for this paper.

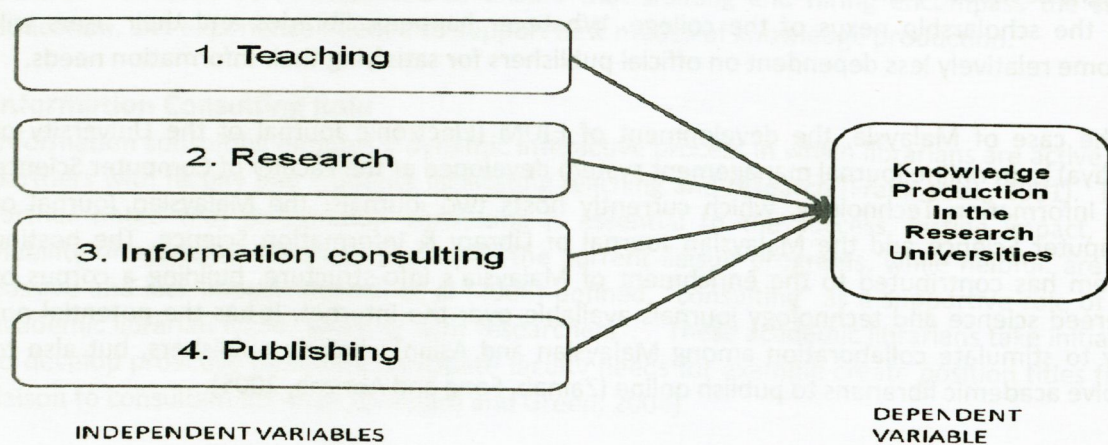


Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework on Scholar Librarian and Knowledge Production

CONCLUSION

The landscape of things surrounds us is changing, paradigm is shifting. It is both either challenges or opportunities. Academic librarians need to respond to these challenges in order to better serve the needs of the entire university population. Academic librarians have been identified as important for the development of researchers. The academic library service is changing the paradigm towards supporting the Mode2 knowledge production. As partners in knowledge production, academic librarians need to gear up with more competencies, such as teaching, research, information consulting and publishing. Academic librarians can also promote skills required to develop and manage Internet based research communities. Understanding the need of researchers for knowledge production activities is a viable means in which academic librarians could help enhance their services and become more responsive to the needs of the university users. The key skills are selecting, gaining access to, or building, the research teams and networks that can achieve a desired research outcome. This will need participation from academic librarians who can assume responsibility for overseeing effective communications, data-flow and information management in the research cycle. It is a role that academic librarians are well placed to think and contribute towards increasing the number of scholarly researches, which will eventually contribute towards the ranking of universities. Academic librarian scholarship is a critical issue for university. The present conditions in higher education challenge academic librarian to fulfil their scholarly role. This paper derived from Boyer (1997) conceptualization of scholarship as composed of four dimensions – research (discovery), integration (information consulting) service (publishing) and teaching – could be used to categorized and enhance academic librarian role in the university ranking efforts.

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