

Developing a model of educational academic library websites

A case study of Iraqi state universities' library websites

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement of Internet technology, establishing library websites has become an important issue. However, an Internet presence is not enough unless these websites are effective in achieving the objectives for which they were established. With respect to the Iraqi state university central libraries, a quick review of their websites shows that they have many shortcomings in providing the services and features that are expected by ordinary patrons.

This study has two major goals: (1) to determine the current state of Iraqi university library websites and (2) to articulate a model to guide the development of these sites by examining the sources of the issues facing these library websites' development. The study also considers the issues that face the development of an Iraqi-specific model for electronic educational resources and the ways in which these resources can be more useful.

Measuring and evaluating Iraqi university libraries' websites are the foci of this dissertation, in which the entire Iraqi national education system of state universities is considered as a single case study using a mixed-methods approach. The study sample includes the entire population of the library websites of the Iraqi state universities that are identified from the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research website. The study consists of three data-gathering exercises: a survey of library directors, interviews with library directors (or a representative of the administration), and a questionnaire for Iraqi LIS faculty members.

This study analyzes and measures the Iraqi universities' libraries' websites by studying the services and features they currently offer and by comparing them with the core components of international academic library websites which have been identified in the professional literature. The list of core components was presented to the Iraqi library and information science (LIS) faculty members to determine what they believe fits the unique needs of Iraqi users. Then, these core components are compared with the components offered by each of the Iraqi university libraries' websites to find out how many of the services and features are currently provided and what prevents these websites from offering the missing services and features.

In general, the Iraqi state university library websites are surprisingly deficient in the services and features they provide. Some of these websites offer a fair number of services, according to the list of services and features collected from the literature. However, other libraries' websites provide very limited services and features. These disparities are affected by several factors, such as whether the library directors have LIS credentials and whether the library staff has LIS credentials and computer skills. Other Iraqi state university library websites need improvement in terms of the quality of their services and features as well as the quantity of these services and features from the perspective of their patrons.

The study concludes with a suggested model for the Iraqi academic library websites' services and features. Study conclusions further suggest that the Ministry should verify the information offered through its website, correct some of the data about the state universities, and unify the official data provided for the public in all official channels. Finally, the study suggests a future research study of Iraqi state university libraries' website usability.

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