A university library management model for students' learning support

Kulthida Tuamsuk [a,*], Kanyarat Kwiecien [a], Jutharat Sarawanawong [b,*]

[a] *Information & Communication Management Program, Khon Kaen University, Thailand*
[b] *Department of Library Science, Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University, Thailand*

Abstract   This research was aimed at developing a university library management model that would support students' learning. The research was conducted in three phases: 1) an investigation into the requirements of a university library service of instructors; 2) an investigation into the attitudes of librarians, libraries' administrators, and university's administrators toward the roles of library and policy concepts relating to university library management that promote students' learning; and 3) the development of a university library management model for students' learning support. A mixed research method was applied comprising qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The findings have led to a proposal of a university library management model that supports student learning, which is comprised of five components: 1) management policy and system; 2) learning resources; 3) learning support services; 4) learning environments; and 5) the competency and roles of information professionals. It can be stated that studies into Thai university library implementation, strategic plans, and self-assessment reports under the quality assurance system showed that even though libraries have updated resources and services following changing situations in policies, technologies, and users' needs, there is no clear indicator that Thai university libraries have any strategy for acquiring roles to support students' learning with practical outcomes. Through reliable research work, this study into a model for university library management would result in a means of developing university libraries that truly supports university student learning based on information from instructors, library administrators, and librarians.

Introduction

Learning is a process derived from searching and acquiring new knowledge, from developing former knowledge that will result in human behavioral changes, practices that rely on knowledge and skills, and the expression of attitudes and values. Learning can be developed by means of education, learning, and reinforcement, and it is a life-long

* Corresponding authors.
  E-mail addresses: kultua@kku.ac.th, Kulthidakku12@gmail.com (K. Tuamsuk).

process for humankind (Birkenholz, 1999). Present university instruction emphasizes self-learning and researching, with the expectation that learners will be able to acquire knowledge on their own to meet individual needs, interests, and aptitudes. The duty of instructors is to promote learners' freedom in decision-making and applying their intellects to the fullest capacity, and to provide opportunities for learners to select their own learning activities. Instructors should train students to know how to learn independently from the beginning of university. It is the instructor's duty to introduce learning approaches, methods for searching learning sources, and how to cope with reporting work, so that learners can appropriately plan their learning. Learners can learn best when they want to learn. The intellectual capacity of each individual may not be the same; however, each person can learn if given time.

In learner-centered instruction — where learners acquire learning behaviors by themselves — the instructors must change their teaching behavior from sole knowledge-giving to active student participation. This can be achieved by posing questions that elicit thinking, thus motivating students to answer and learn. Questioning is an important means of instruction that leads to learners thinking. Besides using questions as an instructional approach, the introduction of information sources and explanation of their use is also essential. The library is where important self-learning resources exist; hence, a library should be managed in line with concepts such as administration, services, management of resources and learning media, the arrangement of atmosphere and facilities that enhance learning, and, not least, cooperation in the teaching and learning of the instructor. A perfect library, and a proper grasp of its role in enhancing learning and teaching, will contribute to the success of institutional student development.

The development of information technology, and the increasing use of resource materials to supplement, extend, and even replace lectures and seminars, has had a considerable impact upon libraries and the services they provide for users. Any approach to education adopted by an academic institution invariably affects the operations of the library (Arko-Cobbah, 2004). A literature review on the roles of university libraries that support students' self-learning demonstrated how librarians have direct roles in promoting students' independent learning. Independent learning places a greater strain on librarians as advisors and tutors (Brophy, 2005). Self-learning behavior increases students' need for information and enhances their researching habits; this means the information provided by the library may not be adequate. Thus, one duty of librarians is to consider broader uses of external information sources by means of cooperation with libraries in other universities, or by locating other existing and available information sources, and then managing the acquired sources effectively for the benefits of instruction (Goodall & Brophy, 1997). Additionally, information services in the library are also important. Librarians should improve existing services in order to best respond to students' self-learning. For example, the service time can be extended to facilitate learners, and various models of service can be incorporated that underscore both individuals' and group's needs. The library's atmosphere can be improved to support self-

learning, the roles of librarians can be adjusted to support students' learning, and broad and easily accessible information resources and media inventory can be compiled to support curricular instruction.

Since the library is an essential part of student learning, it should be reformed so that it is able to integrate its roles into institutional educational reform. Users of the library should be the center of learning, just like in the so-called 'student-centered' approach. The library's management and services should be able to meet with the needs for information from various sources, and for information that can be analyzed and synthesized according to subjects' curricula. Since instructors have a major role in determining course content, activities, and instructional processes, cooperation between the librarian and instructor is vital for the development of the library as a source for learning support. However, studies into Thai university library management, strategic plans, and self-assessment reports under the quality assurance system of the Thai higher education system showed that even though libraries have updated resources and services following changing situations in policies, technologies, and users' needs, there is no clear indicator that Thai university libraries possess any strategy for acquiring roles to support students' learning with practical outcomes. Hence, this study, which was aimed at developing and proposing a university library management model that supports students' learning based on information from instructors, library administrators, and librarians in charge of services through reliable research approaches, would result in a means of developing university libraries that truly supports university student learning.

Literature review

The main duty of university libraries is the support of instruction and research under each university's curricula. In general, university libraries are well prepared in terms of learning resources, tools and information technology equipment, and competent personnel to provide information services — all of which support learning. Learners at the university level are generally ready and keen to learn new things. As grown-up learners, university students are able to reason, understand, and explain abstract ideas effectively. The way learners at this level spend their time affects their learning and development: if the time is spent on things related to their field of study, academic outcomes will be improved. In general, learners are happy to meet and talk with instructors outside the class to ask questions they fail to understand, since it is leisure time that will not impinge on others' learning. They can also acquire knowledge in the library. The study by Liangjindathavorn (1997) showed that students' library use correlated with learning achievement. Students who study and research by themselves in the library and who are capable of appropriately using different services for their learning have been found to be able to manage their learning effectively, and usually show good academic records. Therefore, university libraries are important learning resources whose role in helping to intensively develop students' learning should be promoted. The library's working system should be adjusted in order to respond to the university's instructional