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Phd Clinic and Knowledge Endowment: A Smart, Online Partnership Between Academic Library and Postgraduate Academic Consultants During The Covid 19 Pandemic

Zalifah Awang Zakaria¹, Saidatul Akmar Ismail², Suriana Che Daud³

¹Perpustakaan Tun Abdul Razak, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA, ²College of Computing, Informatics and Media, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40150 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA, ³College of Computing, Informatics and Media, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40150 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA.

Corresponding Author's Email: saidatulakmar@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

Research services have long been referred to as personal research assistance given to library patrons by library staff. The services have been expanding tremendously since the beginning of the 21st century, and abruptly shifting to fully digital, and online activities during the COVID-19 crisis. One of the newly launched, face-to-face consultation services is forced to be operated completely online. The aim of establishing this service to support postgraduate students who have difficulty in understanding or research, or academic writing that does not meet the prescribed language standards. The PhD Clinic begins with two consultants who are faculty members in 2017. Eventually, in 2022, PhD Clinic is proud to announce the commitment of four research consultants who involve under a voluntary service, known as Knowledge Endowment (Waqaf Ilmu). The clinic initially offers in-person advice and academic assistance. However, the crisis prompts the service to go for online consultations which gives rise to customers seeking assistance. Hence, this paper is an attempt to showcase the joint effort of university libraries and faculty members. Due to the COVID 19 epidemic, the endeavor has moved from face-to-face, local gatherings to online, national meetings throughout Malaysia. At present, PhD clinic is seen as an important service to bridge the existing research service with the international collaborators. It is hoped that the service could assist the graduate students to achieve their education and research outcomes, as well as to become active, independent students, and lifelong learners.

Keywords: Knowledge Endowment, Research Service, Wakaf, Academic Library, Smart Partnership, Online Service, Covid 19 Pandemic, Library Management

Introduction

An increased focus on research within Malaysia universities, driven by the federal government's research agenda, has heightened interest in the services and resources

provided by academic libraries to enhance research within higher education institutions. While academic libraries have always had as part of their mission support for research within the university, what constitutes this support has changed over time.

Times of change lead to changes in organizational structures and at Universiti Teknologi MARA Library, Perpustakaan Tun Razak (PTAR) and Library Service Department (LSD) the Research, Learning and Reference Division (RLRD) was reinvented in 2019 to drive library support for research within the university. The purpose of the RLRD is to: proactively support the growth and development of research activities at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) by providing high quality resources, supporting research processes, facilitating scholarly communication and promoting research output and supporting learning, teaching and research activities in university.

During the pandemic, the university library shifted all the possible physical or on-site services to online services including research consultation, virtual reference services, user education training, online information literacy classes, etc. The university community engaged in all those services is notable (Begum and Elahi, 2021). In Malaysia, "online services provided by academic library has emerged as a highly effective method for overcoming the barriers imposed in the wake of coronavirus pandemic and considered as a feasible option to overcome the challenges. Users preferred to use online services due to promptly respond to that request with a minimal delay (Baharuddin, N.S. and Rosman, M .R.M). When students/researchers are temporarily unable to attend in-person, PhD Clinic proactively shifted the platform to online.

Research Division: Shifting The Focus to Digital/ Online

Research Support Services Division (RSSD) was reinvented in 2019 to drive library support for research within the university. The purpose of the RSSD is to: proactively support the growth and development of research activities at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) by providing high quality resources, supporting research processes, facilitating scholarly communication and promoting research output and supporting learning, teaching and research activities in university.

RSSD through its function plans programs to pursue in excellence in provision research support services for the university members. One of the initiatives already implemented is Waqf Ilmu program. This initiative is recognized as Waqf Ilmu program also named as PhD Clinic; it is created initially as charitable act in giving knowledge by experts in multi-disciplinary subject areas. Waqf is an Arabic word, also known as hubous or mortmain property. Waqf literally means as an inalienable charitable endowment under Islamic law. It typically involved donating property such as building, land or assets for charitable purposes with no intention of reclaiming the assets. In this context, Waqf Ilmu (Knowledge-Charity) means a charitable act, or "giving back knowledge" by experts as a noble contribution to the university. As mentioned in hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said, "When a man dies, only three deeds will survive him: continuing alms, profitable knowledge and a child praying for him". This initiative came from Professor in Faculty of Information Management, UiTM who initiated this program in Perpustakaan Tun Razak, UiTM.

PhD Clinic as Waqf Ilmu (Knowledge-Charity) is the central point of contact for research students or scholars who desire to seek research assistant for their research issues in which they are stuck and not finding appropriate guidance from qualified relevant experts. PhD Clinic links students for free consultation to the relevant expert mentors associated

voluntarily with PhD Clinic. This innovative program incorporates experiential learning, free and easy consultation to research experts from various domains.

Hence, this paper reports PhD Clinic as Waqf Ilmu Program in library, supports for research activities in the university environment since year 2017. The main purpose of PhD Clinic is to support UiTM students through all stages of research process. This program develops and sustains a network of young scholars conducting high quality research and allows students or scholars to discuss their research with leading specialists, scholars and peers in an international setting. This program is also focus on the issues faced by master/ PhD students during their dissertation progress.

Research Division: Bridging The Smart Partnership between Academic Library and Faculty Members

Academic libraries have introduced embedded library services since the end of the 20th era. These library services are an expansion from the existing sources in capacity to support the contemporary university's curriculum and teaching strategies. Together with their parent organizations, i.e., the universities and academic libraries are now proactively providing support for the students to improve their educational outcomes. The academic librarians have gone extra miles embedding themselves into research teams on the campuses, and helping the library patrons outside library boundary for many years. This is the beginning of collaborative initiative between the academic librarians and research teams (who are the faculty members themselves).

During this initial stage, among the main types of support mentioned in the library literature include literature review, literature searching, citation management, data management, and information literacy instruction. Those librarians who support these embedded services are known as outreach, liaison work, and liaison officer. Such collaborative efforts are well-accepted at the initial stage, as explained by Kesselman and Watstein (2009), "In academic settings, embedded librarians are in collaborative learning environments. They are on research teams." The librarians usually contribute to the tasks that they are well-trained for, such as literature searching, acquiring and organizing information.

This expansion of library services, together with the librarians immersing themselves in outside duties, gradually, the librarians' know-how has been recognized to assist the research groups to improve the quality of scholarly work and consequently, increase the publications in high impact journals. The research communities are not only faculty members, but also postgraduate students. They are the ones who need the research and reference guidance the most. Eventually, the librarians extend their research-related services to postgraduate students.

In the context of UiTM libraries, research-related services are offered in the form of workshops, and face-to-face consultations. With the current pandemic outbreak, it necessitates these services to be conducted online. One of the research-related services that refocuses from face-to-face consultation to online platform is, PhD Clinic. PhD Clinic is the latest partnership initiative between PTAR Research Division and the faculty members, who remain as research consultants. During this crisis, the initiative stands strong, and thus, turned out to be the earliest smart, online collaboration to launch at PTAR.

Smart, Online Partnership between PTAR Research Division and Faculty Members

Collaboration between librarians and faculty members has always been considered in many libraries' literature as a "challenging and difficult" partnership (Tuamsuk & Nguyen, 2022;

Nguyen & Tuamsuk, 2021; Yu et al., 2019; Franklin, 2013; Julien & Given, 2003). The literature claims that the collaboration is hardly successful due to the lack of Government support, social status differences, and lack of library autonomy and limited budget to boost collaboration. The best that library can offer to their counterparts is to jointly organize course-integrated instruction, participation in research teams, and collaboration with faculty in scholarly communication activities, and they offer.

However, PhD Clinic, run by Research Division, has functioning based on mutual trust and understanding among the library staff in charge, research consultants and patrons. There are no guidelines nor conditions that bound the research consultants to share their knowledge and experience. Those faculty members voluntarily become involved in the PhD Clinic under the banner of Knowledge Endowment. That makes the activity more exciting and professionally satisfying opportunities for faculty members and librarians to share their expertise. This service began with two consultants in 2017. Now, in 2022, we have four consultants to cater for two sessions weekly. PhD Clinic has reached out to all UiTM libraries in 39 branches. This service has been well-accepted by postgraduate students, and is considered successful outreach and user service. The service operates just in time when the concept of Knowledge Endowment is introduced into the University governance by former Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Dr Hassan Said.

Knowledge Endowment (Waqaf Ilmu)

In the context of PTAR Research Division, PhD Clinics is an online learning place which contributes to a knowledge legacy by supporting postgraduate education in UiTM. The Division has laid a platform that allows the faculty members to voluntarily participate in its activities under the banner of Knowledge Endowment.

By contributing to Knowledge Endowment, those faculty members whose role as academic consultants are able to assist:

- Nurturing future scientists and specialists in respective areas of research expertise;
- Providing a stable source of knowledge contributions to the postgraduate community in the university.

In return, these contributors will benefit, as Allah taala promise in the Holy Quran: Blessings in your life and for your hereafter.

As narrated in the Holy Quran (2:274)

“Those who spend their wealth in charity day and night, secretly and openly— their reward is with their Lord, and on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”

A legacy that continues sending you rewards even after your death.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad pbuh also reminds us. As narrated by Abu Hurairah, Prophet Muhammad pbuh said:

"When a man dies, all his good deeds come to an end except three deeds: Ongoing charity (sadaqah jariyah), knowledge from which benefit is gained, and a righteous child who prays for him."

Through Knowledge Endowment platform, the academic consultants are able to use the platform to contribute sadaqah jariyah in the form of existing knowledge, expertise, and experience beneficial to postgraduate education, and benefit from beneficiaries who make dua for these contributors.

Research Division: Widening The International/ Global Reach

In keeping with the vision and mission of university, PTAR has planned a roadmap. One of the milestones is to expand its research services toward international collaboration. By the end of October 2022, PTAR will visit its international collaborator to sign a document for mutual of understanding (MOU). The MOU seems to be a win-win platform that allows international academic library cooperation in organizing conferences and seminars related to education, research, and training, exchanging of library resources and services, and other arrangements that will be held from time to time as agreed among collaborators.

The signing of MOU or mutual of agreement (MOA) is expected to keeping up with the university's objectives through a consistent openness in experts and resource sharing as well as transparent and integrity in mutual engagement and transactions. Hence, PTAR management agrees ePhD Clinic to be the catalyst in global outreach. ePhD Clinics seems to fit this agreement and holds a wider potential to tap knowledge and experience of international experts and scholars. PTAR Research Services is committed to operate under two international collaborative modes, that is, (a) invited international guest consultants; (b) team consultation between local and international consultants. It is hoped that this international engagement could further improve the academic reputation, employer recognition, scholarly citation, and student achievement of the university.

Conclusions

In sum, academic library is part and parcel in soaring the academic achievement and reputation of a university. Traditionally, research services have long served as personal research assistance to library patrons and overseen the quality research preparation and publication of the academics and graduate students. The services have heightened its momentum since the beginning of the 21st century, and exhilarated during the COVID-19 crisis which operating in full digital and online services. PhD Clinic as a newly launched, face-to-face consultation services is forced to operate completely online. The aim of this service is as learning and research advocacy to support postgraduate students who have difficulty in understanding or research, or academic writing that does not meet the prescribed language standards. The humble beginning of PhD Clinic with two consultants who are faculty members in 2017, eventually, now run by four committed consultants in 2022 under a voluntary service, known as Knowledge Endowment (Waqaf Ilmu). The clinic initially offers in-person advice and academic assistance. However, in response to the crisis prompts the service to go for online consultations. Hence, this paper aims to showcase the joint effort of university libraries and faculty members. The online consultation allows the service to reach a greater number of postgraduate and research students throughout Malaysia. The service is expected to expand internationally in a near future. It is hoped that the service could assist the graduate students to achieve their education and research outcomes, as well as to able to leap-frog the status of the university as one of the world renowned tertiary institutions.

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