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Management and Organization of Theses held in University Libraries: An Investigation from Information Professionals in Pakistan

Riffat Mumtaz

University of Sargodha, riffatm40@gmail.com

Dr. Shakeel Ahmad Khan

The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, shakeelkhan575@gmail.com

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Management and Organization of Theses held in University Libraries: An Investigation from Information Professionals in Pakistan

Abstract:

This research aims to investigate the management and organization of theses collection held in university libraries of Punjab Province. It also examines the availability of theses in university libraries, procedures, and techniques applied to organize theses collection and provide access. The quantitative research method by using a questionnaire as a research tool has been applied to collect data from libraries. Results revealed that university libraries possess an adequate number of theses collection in hard and soft form. They are organizing a print collection of theses by using traditional methods. Users can use theses collection under the supervision of library staff and are not allowed to get a photocopy of required pages due to copyright issue. In most of the statements provided by the respondents from public and private sector university libraries, there was no significant difference in the opinion of respondents to organize and manage thesis collection in university libraries. The study recommended that university libraries should manage this important piece of collection by using digital repository development software in their libraries and ensure proper management of theses collection and its use by the research community around the globe. The study also recommended that e-theses should be submitted in the national repository so that no one can pirate this intellectual work and users may get the maximum benefit from this intellectual source of information.

Keywords: Management of theses, Organization of theses, Access of theses, Theses Collection, University Libraries, Pakistan

Introduction:

Writing for publication or thesis is one of the most important means of academic enculturation for graduate students. A record of academic publication gives emerging scholars license to position themselves as legitimate members of particular discourse and communities. Academic writing has an important role in a student's academic activities. Teachers are also always involved in academic writings to convey their experiences and knowledge to their students (Kamler & Thomson, 2014). In any library, theses have a very unique position and treated as a valuable collection. It is necessary for libraries to properly process and manage theses collection and ensure its availability for the researchers and library users (Fredrickson & Gardner, 2016). Students at the Master and Ph.D. level are producing theses for the award of their degrees as a partial requirement. They are producing very important data and results in their research studies. However, this body of literature is obtaining a little attention in libraries to properly organize and make it available for the users. In the recent decade, efforts are being made to organize it in digital form and provide worldwide access for global users (Materu-Behitsa, 2008). Theses collection offers research-based results for the researchers regarding the particular research problem in any area. At the moment, most unpublished theses are hard to get hold of, as they are filed only in the university library where the student has worked. However, theses

collection in many libraries has not obtained proper attention of library staff to professionally manage it and make available for the users (Urs, 1999). In western countries, this collection is treated very carefully to address the problems associated with theses management. However, there are still numbers of libraries where there is a need to apply a uniform standard to ensure the systematic arrangement of theses collection (Vijayakumar & Vijayakumar, 2007). Research studies on the organization of theses, its digitally retrieval and virtual access showed that networked digital repositories are being developed in many university libraries to properly manage theses collection and facilitate the library users. Since the inception of the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in 1996, a very vast majority of universities have joined it as a member and partner in the project (Suleman et al., 2001).

The above literature showed that research students are conducting research and producing research-based knowledge in form of theses and research publication under the supervision of qualified teachers and later on they submit their theses work in the hard and soft form to libraries for the purpose to include their piece of work in library collection so that, it might be referenced in further upcoming researches. The management and organization of theses is a matter of great concern for university libraries. In Pakistan, very few libraries like Punjab University Lahore, G.C University Lahore, National College of Arts Lahore, University of Management & Technology, University of Faisalabad, National Textile University Faisalabad and Beacon House National University Lahore have started to develop a digital repository of theses collection to properly manage and preserve it for its re-use. However, most libraries do not value the theses collections to manage it properly. It is the core responsibility of libraries to manage and organize this important collection of information. There are different approaches in different libraries all over the world to handle this collection. As compared to other countries, libraries in Pakistan are far behind in adopting modern trends, tools, and techniques to organize this scholarly piece of information and make it accessible for the researchers as and when required by them. Through this research, an attempt is made to examine the procedure and practices being adopted in university libraries of Punjab, Pakistan to organize this valuable collection. Review of literature also showed that there is a dearth of literature on this topic and no comprehensive study has been conducted in Pakistan to examine the organization and access of theses in university libraries of Punjab, Province. Hence, this study has been conducted.

This study investigates the current process of organization and management of theses collection in university libraries. This study also identifies the problems faced by libraries in handling theses collection. Results obtained through this research are valuable for libraries to properly organize and manage thesis collection in their libraries.

Research Objectives:

To address the above-mentioned research problem, the following research objectives were prepared:

1. To examine the availability of thesis collection in university libraries of Punjab.
2. To study the current procedures and techniques adopted by university libraries to organize and manage thesis collection.
3. To investigate the policies adopted by university libraries to provide access to thesis collection.
4. To provide necessary recommendations that may help out the university libraries to properly organize and manage thesis collection for its wider usage among the research community.

Research Methodology

The quantitative research method has been used in this research study to collect data from the respondents. The survey research method was employed to carry out the research. A questionnaire was used as a research tool to collect the responses from the population. An extensive review of related literature was conducted to develop a first draft of the questionnaire. It was sent to the subject experts for necessary comments. All the comments were addressed in the final version of the questionnaire. The closed-ended question was used in the questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale was used to get the responses from the respondents. It was pre-tested on 20 respondents to see if they are facing problems to understand the statements given in the questionnaire. However, no ambiguity was noted by the end of respondents during pre-testing. After pre-testing, a questionnaire (**Appendix A**) was ready to collect data from the population. The population of the study comprised of private and public sector university libraries situated in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. Information about HEC recognized private and public sector universities were retrieved from the website of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). According to this a list (**Appendix B**) comprising of a total of 67 universities in Punjab Province was prepared. Data was collected from a librarian working in each HEC university library and handling theses collection. The researcher herself visited the targeted universities to collect data. Data were also collected using e-mail from the universities situated in far-flung areas. It is important to mention, that researchers faced a problem in data collection from some universities. During data collection phase, some universities did not provide data regarding organization and management of theses collection in their libraries by saying that it is their confidential record and they don't disclose it to any third party. In some universities, there was the non-professional staff working there, so data was not collected from these universities. In two universities, some renovation work was being carried out and the researcher was not allowed to visit the library for data collection. Hence, out of a total of 67 public and private universities in Punjab, data was successfully collected from 54 universities and the response rate was 80%.

Review of Related Studies

This section presents the review of related literature to understand the importance of theses collection, its management, and organizations in university libraries.

Universities are judged not only by the strength of their students, faculty, and staff but also on the "excellence and relevance of their research (Hunte, 2011). Libraries are assigned the duty of acquiring, processing, preserving, and

disseminating the relevant materials to their patrons. Apart from the traditional ways of library resources like selection & acquisition of books, one key source through which the resources of the university library are enriched is the collection of theses and dissertation work conducted by research students. Theses and dissertations are written by research students under the supervision of research supervisors. After completion of research work, one copy of the theses is submitted to the university library as a record. After submission of this research work, different technical procedures are done on it like an entry in relevant register, assigning classification numbers and developing catalog, etc. After completion of all these processes, this research material is kept in the reference section of the library, usually, this material is not issued to library patrons, and they can consult it within the library premises only. Hence, the proper management and organization of theses are very much required in university libraries (Ezema and Ugwu, 2013). Despite the potential effectiveness of this important literature, it lacks ample care in terms of its proper organization and arrangement (Swain, 2010). That's why Sinha (2006) grieved that theses frequently languish in oblivion in the libraries of the universities and documentation stores. Due to the low visibility and difficult accessing process and this research work is not optimally used in libraries of the universities. Okoro (2003) in his study inferred that this writing remains unpublished due to its important nature.

Friend (1998) in his study admitted the fact that best scholarly study is mostly printed after the accomplishment of theses or dissertations invaluable publications like academic periodicals, but a majority of completed theses which are not published in any academic journal just suffer to stay in library cabinets and are seldom accessed. Isaac and Stephen (1992) indicated that access to theses is conventionally somewhat limited as to whom, when, at where, and how these are accessible for consultation. All these restrictions are conventional and keep up through plans made by commissions, concerned departments, graduate schools, and institutional libraries. Amadasu (2010) agreed with the opinion of Isaac (1992) and indicated that the management of this research work is the obligatory duty of libraries. It is, therefore, bounden duty of the library administration to make sure that this significant research has been managed in a professional way for access and usage. Rules should be applied to confirm appropriate protection and ease of access for the users. Another study conducted by Ilo et al. (2015) concluded that theses, projects, and dissertations are included in grey literature and very valuable scholarly resources in libraries. So it is a dire essential for these academic libraries to organize them according to well-organized systems and ensure the proper protection and distribution approaches. They further recommend that classification, cataloging, indexing, and abstracting for processing this scholarly work should be done.

It is a fact that theses and dissertations are an important asset to enhance the significance of libraries among researchers. Theses and dissertations have consistently been very important writing since it isn't distributed among users openly. This is the reason that this sort of writing has consistently been the first need of benefactors for getting a fresh source of data. Prytherc (2000) indicated that proper rules and regulations are indispensable for regulating the verified information afterward its creation contains the maintenance, storage, and disposition among others. This will facilitate scholars to get satisfaction from this rich information source. Tbaishat (2018) described in his research study that in an Arab speaking world, access to theses is limited only in print form and can be retrieved inside the library buildings only. However, if connected with Internet, theses storehouse can make the availability of full-text material to all faculty; students and scholars in networked information.

Das (2007) in his study found that the research scholars in national foundations and colleges of India have more noteworthy access to scholarly writings of research because of contribution to numerous e-libraries and scholarly research databases in many of the subjects. However, the entrance to proposition and exposition writing is so restricted because of the absence of databases of theses and dissertations, both in bibliographic and full-text contents arrangements at a national level. Gayan (2014) in his research work observed the same situation and indicated that in India, many university libraries have restricted the loaning or copying of research work which is a hurdle to scholarly research of the output of university researches and should be presented to current researchers.

The above review presented that theses and dissertations are a very important source of information for research scholars. The review also showed that very little attention is being made by libraries to organize this scholarly piece of writing and present it for the researchers for maximum use. There is a dire need for university libraries to take necessary steps and properly manage this piece of information for the worldwide research community. However, very few studies have been conducted to analyze and evaluate the management and organization of this precious source of knowledge in university libraries.

Data Analysis

This section presents the analyzes and interpretation of data collected to achieve the research objectives.

Type of University

To know about the type of participating universities/DAIs, the respondents were asked about the type of institution in which they are working. It shows that majority of the respondents $n=31$ (57.4%) were from public sector universities and $n=23$ (42.6%) respondents were working in the private sector universities. The given figure indicates that more than half of the respondents were from the public sector.

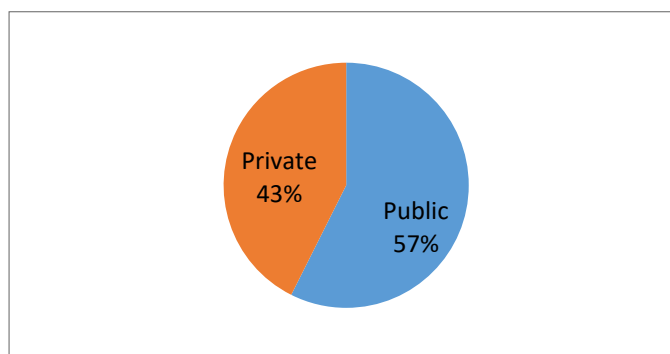


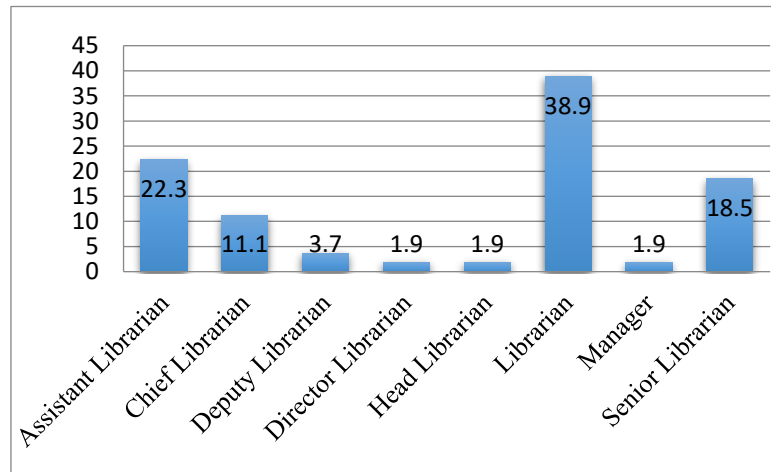
Figure 1: Type of University

Designation of the Respondents

Responses against the question related to the designation of the respondents showed that the majority was “Assistant Librarian” $n=12$ (22.3%), the second majority was of “Chief Librarian” $n=6$ (11.1%). There were very few respondents

who were working as Director Librarian, n= 2 (3.7%), and “Deputy Librarian” n=1 (1.9%) respectively. The respondents having the designation of “Head Librarian” and “Librarian” were n= 21 (38.9%) and n= 1 (1.9%). There were “Library Managers” followed by 1.9 %. And “Senior Librarian” n=10 (18.5%). This shows that majority of the respondents were librarians, assistant librarians, and senior librarians while the small number of respondents were head librarians, managers, and director librarian respectively. (See Figure 2)

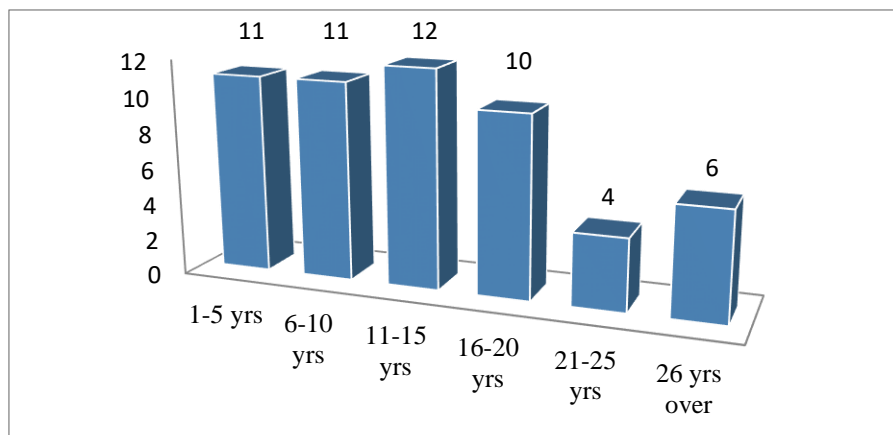
Figure 2: Designation of the Respondents



Respondents’ Professional Experience

Respondents were asked to mention their professional experience. Figure 3 shows that respondents n=11 (20.4%) were having professional experience ranging from both 1-5 years and 6-10 years. There were twelve respondents (22.2%) having experience ranged from 16-20 years. There were four (7.4%) respondents who had professional experience from 21-25 years and the last of respondents was n= 6 (11.1%) having professional experience of 26 years and above respectively.

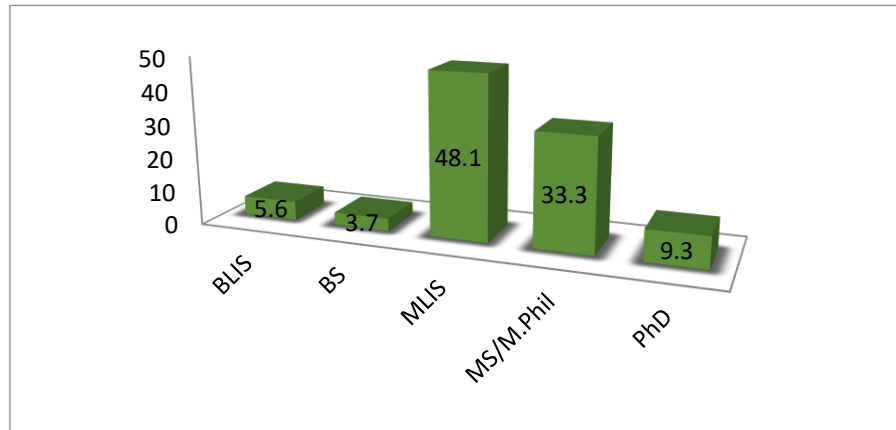
Figure 3: Respondents’ Professional Experience



Qualification of the Respondents

Qualification was another variable mentioned in the questionnaire for which the library respondents were asked to give a response. Figure 4.4 reveals that frequency n=3 (5.6%) were BLIS, frequency n=2 (3.7%) having BS degree, frequency n=26 (48.1%) having MLIS degree, frequency n=18 (33.3%) having MS/M. Phil and the last frequency n= 5 (9.3%) had the highest qualification as Ph.D. This result showed that the majority of the respondents were MLIS and M. Phil.

Figure 4: Qualification of the Respondents



Availability of Print Theses in University Libraries

Results regarding the availability of theses in print form showed that most of the universities possessed theses up-to 500 in print form n=18(33.3%), the second majority of the universities mentioned that they have 1001 to 5000 theses in print form n=17 (31.5%). Some universities responded that they have theses collection ranging from 5001 to 10000, and n=6 (11.1%) showed the availability of these as more than 10000. As a great number of theses are available in university libraries of Punjab Province in print form, these must be digitized to develop soft form and organize the material by developing digital repository.

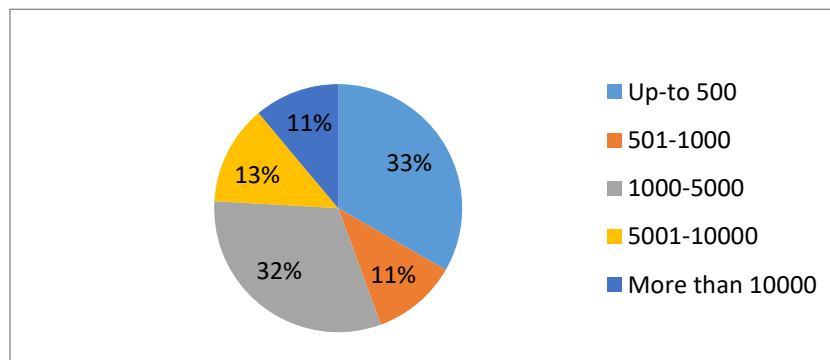


Figure 5: Availability of Print Theses in University Libraries

Availability of Theses in Soft Form in University Libraries

Results regarding the availability of theses in soft form showed that the majority of the university libraries possess a soft form of these ranging from 500 and 1000-5000. It showed that a big segment of the university libraries have theses collection in soft form and that needs to be properly organized and managed for researchers.

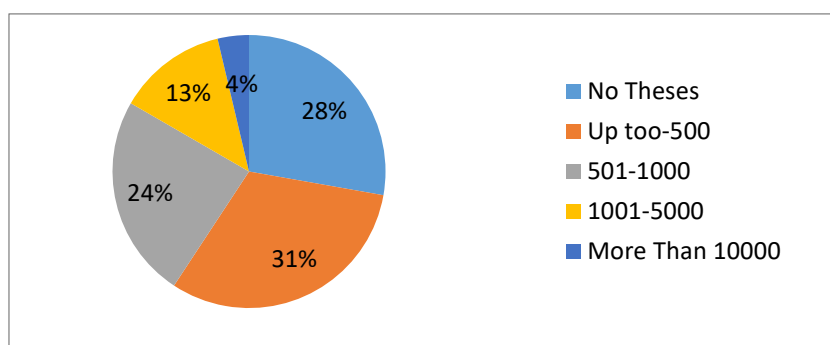


Figure 6: Availability of Soft Form of Theses in University Libraries

Management and Organization of Thesis Collection in University Libraries

Respondents were inquired about the procedure they used to organize theses collection in university libraries. Table 4.1 showed that university libraries were properly organizing theses collection. They agreed that all theses are entered in the relevant register" (M=3.98), "theses collections are displayed on the shelves to attract library users" (M=3.89), "all theses are properly classified and catalogued" (M=3.85), "index of theses collection is properly developed and updated" (M=3.67), "new arrivals of theses collections are properly displayed" (M=3.63). Respondents were agreed that "Theses are searchable in the OPAC/catalogue" (M=3.59), "theses collections are kept in open shelves in the reference section for the users for their consultation" (M=3.50). Their response was neutral regarding the statements: "It is compulsory for students to submit a soft copy of the thesis in the library", (M=3.30), "abstracting of the theses collection is prepared in our library" (M=2.85).

Table 1: Procedures & Techniques to Manage and Organize Thesis Collection

Sr. No	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Theses are kept in the reference section of the library.	4.15	.902
2	All theses are entered in the accession register.	3.98	1.090
3	The theses collections are displayed on shelves to attract the library users for use.	3.89	1.127
4	All theses are properly classified and catalogued.	3.85	1.123
5	Index of theses collection is properly developed and updated.	3.67	1.082

6	New arrivals of theses collections are properly displayed.	3.63	1.248
7	Theses are searchable in the OPAC/catalogue.	3.59	1.206
8	Theses collections are kept in open shelves for the users for their consultation	3.50	1.370
9	Abstracting of the theses collection is prepared in our library.	2.85	1.172
10	Theses collection is preserved by using a fumigation chamber.	2.80	1.088

Scale used: Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1

Policies to Provide User Access to Theses Collection

Respondents were asked about the policies they were following to provide user access to the theses collection, Table 4.2 shows that respondents were agreed with one statement "Library users are instructed to only get notes from the theses" (M=3.69). However, their response was neutral with other statements regarding policies to provide user access to theses collection.

Table 2: Policies Regarding User's Access

Sr. No	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Library users are instructed to only get notes from the theses.	3.69	1.113
2	Users are not allowed to get a photocopy of complete theses.	3.39	1.295
3	Open access to theses collection is provided to the library user.	3.35	1.291
4	Library users are not provided theses in soft form.	3.35	1.216
5	Library users are provided a copy of theses abstract only.	3.28	1.106
6	Theses are kept locked. However, library users are provided access to theses on request.	3.15	1.5473
7	Open access is provided to theses.	3.13	1.318
8	Theses are issued to the users in our library.	2.33	1.149

Scale used: Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1

Restrictions Regarding Use of Theses

Analysis of data about restrictions regarding the use of theses collection showed that university libraries in Punjab, Province are applying necessary restrictions to protect their theses collection from theft. They were agreed that “User can only consult theses in the library” (M=4.24) and “Under the supervision of library staff” (M=3.83), “Soft copies of theses are not provided to the users” (M=3.74), “Theses are not issued to the library users” (M=3.69).

Table 3: Restrictions regarding use of Theses

Sr. No	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Users can only consult theses in the library.	4.24	.823
2	Library users can consult the theses under the supervision of library staff.	3.83	1.145
3	Soft copies of theses are not provided to the users.	3.74	1.049
4	Theses are not issued to the library users.	3.69	1.096
5	Users are not allowed to copy or get a picture of the thesis.	3.26	1.169

Scale used: Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1

Significance Difference in the Opinion of Respondents in Organizing Thesis Collection

T-test was applied to see whether there is a significant difference in the opinion of respondents in organizing theses collection available in public and private sector university libraries of Punjab. Results showed that a significant difference was found in the respondent's opinion regarding the organization of theses in two of the statements, “All these are properly classified and catalogued,” and “Theses collections are kept in open shelf for the users for their consultation”. It showed that respondents from public and private sector university libraries were not using the same method to classify and catalogue theses collection and placed them in the library. It also showed that in public and private university libraries there is a different strategy to provide access to theses collection. Other results in table 4.9 showed that achieved p-value [sig. (2-tailed)] is higher than defined alpha value ($\alpha = 0.05$). So there was no significant difference in the opinion of respondents in various statements regarding the organization of these. It showed that according to these statements they were organizing theses on the same pattern.

Table 9: Significant Difference in the Opinion of Respondents in Organizing Thesis Collection

Organization of Thesis Collection	Mean		t-value	Sig.2-tailed
	Public N= (31)	Private N= (23)		
All theses are entered into the thesis register.	4.13	3.78	1.158	0.252
All theses are properly classified and catalogued	4.19	3.39	2.753	0.008*
Theses are searchable in the OPAC/catalogue	3.77	3.35	1.293	0.202
Theses are kept in the reference section of the library	4.13	4.17	-.176	0.861
The theses collections are displayed on the shelves to attract the library users for use	4.13	3.57	1.859	0.069
Students must submit a soft copy of the thesis in the library	3.23	3.39	-.471	0.640
Theses collections are kept in open shelves for the users for their consultation	3.97	2.87	3.148	0.003*
New arrivals of theses collections are properly displayed	3.90	3.26	1.916	0.061
Index of theses collection is properly developed and updated	3.71	3.61	.336	0.738
Abstracting of the theses collection is prepared in our library	2.65	3.13	-1.523	0.134
Theses collection is preserved by using fumigation chamber	2.77	2.83	-.172	0.864

Note: $\alpha=0.05$

Discussion:

Results showed that there is a significant collection of theses in a soft form in university libraries of Punjab and this collection is increasing at a rapid pace because research students must submit a soft copy of his/her theses in the library. So, libraries need to develop a proper management system to well organize this precious research collection for library users.

It has been observed that university libraries in Punjab Province of Pakistan are using traditional methods to organize a print form of thesis collection. As they mentioned the technical processing of thesis collection that includes entering the thesis in the thesis register after classification, index of theses is developed to make it searchable through library catalogue/OPAC. Then, this collection is placed in the reference section of the library for library users.

However, there is no description regarding the management of thesis copies which being collected from the research students in soft form. Results showed

that there is an adequate collection of theses received by university libraries in soft form.

University libraries in Punjab Province of Pakistan have implemented the number of restrictions in using thesis collection. They are not offering open access. Users are only allowed to take notes only and they are neither issued theses collection and nor permitted to get a photocopy. A soft copy of theses is also not provided. This method of access is totally against the modern policies that support and promote open access to scholarly material to accelerate research and innovation. It is a fact that unnecessary hindrances in accessing the thesis collection will not promote its usability among researchers and the precious work done by one researcher will not be further cited or used in the research work conducted by other researchers. But in the current era, it is a common practice by modern libraries to manage digital repositories of theses collection and offer free access for research scholars in the world to enhance optimum and fair use of thesis collection.

Conclusions & Recommendations

University libraries possess an adequate number of theses collection for the research community. They are organizing theses collection for its use in the library. However, there is a dire need to manage this precious source of information for the research community around the globe by developing digital repositories of electronic theses and dissertations in university libraries. It is strongly recommended that university libraries should manage this important piece of collection by applying digital repository development software in their libraries and ensure technology-based management of theses collection to address the research needs of the worldwide research community. E-theses should be submitted in the national repository so that no one can pirate this intellectual work. It is further recommended that open access to thesis collection should be provided for the research community to promote the research culture. It would become easy to identify plagiarism when theses will be submitted in the national repository because this is the only way to protect theses from intellectual theft. If theses & dissertations are not submitted in the national repository then anyone can easily pirate it and present it as his/her creation. Necessary measures must be taken by the university library administration to promote easy access to thesis collection and ensure the fair use of this important work.

Practical Implications

University libraries can benefit from this study to make the necessary decision for organizing and managing thesis collection based on modern practices. They can learn how to apply necessary measures to protect theses collection and provide access to the users. Recommendations presented in this work are highly important for university libraries to manage this important source for the worldwide research community by developing a digital repository of electronic thesis and dissertation in university libraries.

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