

Empowering Librarians through Collaboration: Demonstrating Value

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Abstract

Academic libraries and librarians have always been involved in some kind of collaboration within the campus communities since ages. With the advent of technologies combined with violent funding crisis and perception of relevance battles, academic libraries are trying their best to demonstrate value to their campus community to stay afloat. This paper discusses the opportunities available for libraries and librarians to enhance their faculties and empower the librarians through creative collaboration in the areas of research and learning support; scholarly communication activities and research data management to ensure the sustainability and relevance of the institution and the profession.

Keyword: Collaboration, Liaison Librarian, Research Support, Research Data Management, Institutional Repository

Introduction:

Advanced forms of technologies have shaken the libraries that used to imagine that it will be their territory for always. The crisis of funding in higher education environment together with the changes of technologies which has greatly impacted teaching and learning styles has pressured the libraries to rethink and defend their value to the organization. Defending their value this time requires libraries to move into higher end support whereby the librarians must adopt a new service models which are based on collaborations among internal or external academic partners.

Libraries and collaboration is not a recent trend even though the literature in the field of library science shows that the subject has only grown significant since the beginning of 21st century. Libraries have always been known as being collaborative. Mattessich, Murray-Close and Monsey (2001) trace the study of collaboration to the mid-to-late 1970's, when "pressure from funders" prompted organizations to pool their resources to stretch grant dollars. Today, the need to collaborate is greater than ever for libraries with the tightening of the budget which decrease their power in purchasing of information resources especially online journals and databases and the *raison d'etre* which is not what it was in the past. Though libraries still function as repositories for prints and media materials, that role is quickly changing. Henderson (2016) mentions that even for academic libraries, outreach and programming is taking on a greater role in our mission. Collaborating with other campus departments, programs or external organizations is becoming increasingly common and can assist the libraries in providing stronger services for the patrons and demonstrate value to their communities.

A report published in the year 2009-10 from Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) entitled "What's the value of an academic library?" suggests that projecting library value could also allow libraries to market themselves more effectively. Among the report's recommendations include: "Determine what libraries enable students, faculty, student affairs professionals, administrators and staff to do;" "Define outcomes;" "Demonstrate and develop library impact on student learning outcomes;" "Demonstrate and improve library support of faculty teaching;" and "Record library contributions to overall institutional reputation and prestige," (pp.7-10) to name just a few (Oaklef, 2011). The report signals that showing library's value is imperative in securing trust and interest for collaborations. The report conveys that visible libraries will have greater perceived value in their community.

Wilder Research Center defines collaboration as a mutually beneficial and well defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. According to Dean, K.S. (2010), the learning literature argues that collaboration not only transfers existing knowledge among organizations, but also facilitates the creation of new knowledge and produce synergistic solutions. Initially, libraries exist to help people in seeking knowledge and right now with the educational climate dramatically changing; libraries have to adapt to meet their patron's needs.

The public funded Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) in Malaysia is following the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) transformation blueprint designated as Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 – 2025 (MEB) Higher Education (HE). It gives direction to the HLI's community to soar upwards and be on the right track with high standard vision and mission statements. One of the many important objectives outlined is to uphold the high performance of universities in order to attain excellent result in Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and Times Higher Education (THE) rankings. Various strategy objectives (SO) are to be executed especially in soaring Malaysian universities status towards world class universities through few programs namely Accelerated Program for Excellence (APEX) and Research Universities (RU). MEB (HE) outlines ten (10) shifts to be executed, and HLIs communities should be concern of supporting the advancement of Research and Development (R&D) landscape. Since the aspect of strengthening the commercialization of research works is often mentioned, HLIs administrators were encouraged to embed with researchers to extend the tasks. With the implementation of MEB, even though libraries were not directly mentioned on the task, the info structure part is stated in one of the shifts involving Globalized Online Learning. Thus, it has intangibly pressured the Academic Librarians to change their roles and outlook to be more relevant in supporting research and learning styles of 21st century. For that reasons, The Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Library has taken immediate actions to revamp the services extended to the academic community to assist and collaborate on the transformation that will be taking place in years to come.

Working with others to ride the currents of change will empower the libraries and librarians to expand beyond their traditional role. Collaboration is fundamental for library survival and success and librarians must reach beyond the bookshelves to make an impact on their university and campus community in order to remain as key players in academic arena. This paper acknowledges collaboration as an important agenda that serve to fulfill academic libraries' mission of supporting research and learning, scholarly communication and data management activities in academic community.

Research and Learning Support

One of the methods in engaging in collaboration activities in academic environment among library and researchers is through liaison or a subject specialist because it supports communications and improved relationship among librarians and faculties. The collaboration was also known as the key

factor of successful implementation of Research Support Services especially if followed by the strengthening of the functions of the Subject or Liaison Academic Librarians.

Currently, there are about 31 librarians in the main Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Library who are involve in supporting the research and learning activities in various ways and tasks given. Two major groups of librarians well known for supporting the researchers in the University are:

- i) USM Liaison Librarians Committee
- ii) Team of Librarians involved in Strategic Program in Research Support Service (SPiReSS)

USM Liaison Librarians Committee

USM Liaison Librarians Committee has existed since the 80's to support and collaborate with the academicians and faculties in teaching and learning activities. The liaison librarians were grouped according to faculties and subjects specified in the field of Science, Social sciences, Arts and Humanities to cater the needs of the researchers. Among the tasks to be fulfilled by the liaisons are:

- a) To conduct Researcher Profile classes, (ORCID ID, Google Scholar ID, Scopus ID, Researcher ID) for academicians to share on the benefit of having an ID to identify their own works and ease the University audit processes)
- b) To organize *Jerayawara* or Library roadshows to the faculties whereby a library team including top management and services sections showcasing services offered by the library and at the same time get acquainted with the faculty members.
- c) To disseminate information through e-mail using the brand *@Perpustakaan*
- d) To update the Virtual Subject Library contents for specified subject.
- e) To cooperate in providing information and programs requirements for Accreditation/Schools/Centres Auditing
- f) Organizing Symposia (*Simposium Perpustakaan Bersama Pusat Pengajian*) to share important matters related to Assessment, Publication and Research.

According to Tennant, et al. (2006), Liaison librarian, library liaison, subject bibliographer, subject librarian, subject specialist—different names for the same concept: a librarian who focuses on a

particular subject area and client base. This approach to service, which has existed to varying degrees for decades, has been shown to facilitate communication with clients, enhance the reputation of the library, and improve services.

Liaison Librarians in USM Library used to be a Working Committee managed by an appointed Division who meet and discuss on initiatives to be adopted to extend its services to the academic community. However, starting from February 2018, the Committee is managed by a unit called Research Support Unit under the Academic and Research Section with the supervision of the Senior Deputy Chief Librarian. The unit will focus on designing programs where the Liaison Librarians are identified, trained and groomed to be able to work closely with faculties to support learning and research activities.

Strategic Program in Research Support Service (SPiReSS)

Universiti Sains Malaysia as a research university certainly needs lots of collaborations to achieve higher return of successful research products. This is an opportunities for the librarians in promoting services offered to cater the needs of the researchers. Apart from providing information in the form of books and subscribed journals, librarians also transforming their expertise to establishing a support services that will facilitate the researchers' needs. In 2013, the library top management has reviewed and formulated new strategies in the library transformation plan by establishing a new team called SPiReSS – Strategic Program in Research Support Service consisting of librarians who will conduct series of classes with the objectives:

- i) To facilitate the researchers to work smart in academic writing and scholarly publishing.
- ii) To help researchers on managing the research data.
- iii) To help researchers to use interactive online applications that could simplify the research works.

The SPiReSS idea was actually derived from the Research Support Service (RSS) model but has been modified to meet the purpose for R&D background according the Malaysian HLIs. The team act as a task force in executing information literacy segment by providing assistance in identified modules such as:

- a) Open Access Publication
- b) Mendeley: Bibliography Management Tool
- c) Google Drive
- d) Google Scholar
- e) Easy to Write with MS Word for Thesis Writing

The team was trained and groomed to be able to conduct training, to advise on research publication, and to liaise with the researchers on scholarly communication and finding solutions on technical data for research. The team has collaborated with lecturers in the faculties by offering customized classes to meet their subjects and learning needs. The Library has collaborated with Pusat Transformasi Insan, USM (USM Training Centre) in organizing trainings to fulfill both Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program for staff and Continuous Student Development (CSD) program for students. The team has held about 46 classes with the total of 433 participants in 2015, 57 classes with total of 526 participants in 2016 and as in 2017 the team has doubled the classes to about more than 100 classes with higher number of participants to 800 people approximately.

As quoted by Mitchell (2013), research support services are growing areas of importance in academic libraries and are part of the libraries' larger goal to provide wider support for research-related services. Under the new cluster, it is very much hoped that the Research Support Unit will help in enhancing the functions of both committee and team to better support the University agenda in increasing research outputs which will contribute in higher publications and generating positive outcomes in University's audit and assessments.

Another possible area for collaboration for academic libraries is in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). In Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 for Higher Education, MOOCs has been identified as one of the key areas to be explored to establish national e-learning platform to coordinate and spearhead content development. Some key initiatives include:

- i. Making online learning an integral component of higher education and lifelong learning and requiring up to 70% of programs to use blended learning.
- ii. Establishing the required cyber infrastructure which includes physical network structure, info structure platform, devices and equipment to strengthen the capabilities of the academic community to deliver online learning at scale.

There are many new services and technologies inquiry that could be associated with the 21st century learning styles and library should not lose the baton of their stewardship.

Scholarly communication activities

According to Pandey (2014), digitization of information materials is the process of converting analogue information to a digital format. It is one of the newest methods of managing information resources in the new information age, whereby information technology has assisted in making information accessible to people even in their homes. Digitization improves access to library resources and all collections where it will be accessible to all researchers.

As the world move forward to digitization, USM Library also has implemented digitization since 1996. The digitization process at USM Library began in the year 1996 based on the web by using html codes only "text based" in the first phase. The digitized material were merely abstracts of theses (PhD and Master) and also previous exam papers. In the second phase of digitization, the Library shifts to a larger server and using Lotus technology. All these materials are stored in the database to facilitate access towards the material. In the third phase (December 2003), Universiti Sains Malaysia through the Library has taken the initiative to implement the "Document Management and Knowledge Sharing Solution "or known as "DocuShare". DocuShare content includes ISO documentation, exam papers, theses abstracts, newspaper clippings, research papers, conference papers, photos and library bulletins.

Along with the development of open source software, the library has taken steps to produce an institutional repository using open source software. In May 2008, Library in collaboration with Knowledge, Communication and Technology Center, Universiti Sains Malaysia has developed an institutional repository using open source software named Eprints. Eprints are used as an open archive for research papers, images, audio, videos and more. Since then, institutional repository called Repository@USM has been established.

Universiti Sains Malaysia Institutional Repository (USMIR) or Repository@USM serves as a repository for storing variety of electronic information materials such as articles from academic magazines, books, thesis, examination papers, research reports, photographs and others. This repository provides free access around the world and can be used freely for research and learning at the University. It can be used as an online reference source that easy, effective and accessible at any

time via the Internet. This repository is not a publication for the materials deposited here but it is a collection of online archive. The main purpose of this repository is to provide online reference materials and digital contents to individuals and University. USM Library is the department responsible for managing the repository as a whole.

Institutional repositories are a practical, cost-effective, and strategic means for library to build collaborations with lecturers, students and researchers to advance scholarly communication. In conjunctions to that, Library collaborates with all schools and departments in main campus of Universiti Sains Malaysia and also all branches and act as a center for managing all the university publication through Repository@USM. Academicians can submit their publications to Repository@USM and promote their research which is visible through Google Scholar. The visibility of the publications supports knowledge sharing among researchers.

Another cooperation made by the Library in 2015 was with the USM Legal Office and Knowledge, Communication and Technology Center with the establishment of *e-PERUNDANGAN* which is a repository to store all the policies, guidelines, rules and others documents that have been approved by the Top Management of the Universiti Sains Malaysia / Responsible Center for ease of reference and implementation. The contents of this repository include Policies, Guidelines, Regulations, Constitution, Statutes, Establishments, Terms of Reference and others to facilitate the University's ability to obtain accurate documentation.

Foster and Gibbons (2005) have mentioned that IRs provide an institution with a mechanism to showcase its scholarly output, centralize and introduce efficiencies to the stewardship of digital documents of value, and respond proactively to the escalating crisis in scholarly communication. To accomplish this, librarians from scholarly communication, public services, technical services, and more must work together to address lingering questions and concerns. Meeting regularly, sharing information as well as tasks, breaking down siloes, collaborating, and thinking creatively about obstacles can greatly increase the opportunities for success. It cannot simply be the job or responsibility of one group, or, even worse, one person on a campus. Scholarly communication is a multifaceted issue that should be addressed through education, outreach, recognition, and fiscal support.

Research Data Management

An area where few libraries offer support and collaborate is in managing and archiving research data. Nowadays, Research Data Management (RDM) services are being implemented by academic and research libraries worldwide in support of university research activities. The activities come to light because the University must meet the needs and demands of various performance assessments and ratings of the University at the national and international levels. Libraries and librarians are stepping in as a natural support for data related needs. They have highly relevant information standards and organizational skills, including expertise in setting up file structures, knowledge of workflows and collection management, describing data in accordance with established metadata schemes and controlled vocabulary, collection curation or preservation and service provision in form of helpdesks, training, availability of subject specialists etc. (Ray, 2014). Keil, D. E (2014) argues that to manage data and preserve its availability in the future, a qualified team of experts is required. There is a demand for libraries to place themselves to address scientific data management for the campus and associated collaborators.

Since the year of 2010, USM Librarians have been involved in providing publication data to Corporate Development Division, USM for Malaysia Research Assessment Instrument (MyRA) purposes. Malaysian universities aspire to become centre for education excellence and are undergoing a revolution. 'MyRA' is an acronym for the Malaysian Research Assessment Instrument formulated by Ministry of Higher Education. It is a comprehensive system developed to assess the research capacity and performance of all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia. Developed in 2006, the first objective was to meet the Malaysian Research University (MRU) agenda of the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and to identify 5 universities in Malaysia to be awarded Malaysian Research University (MRU) status. For universities to qualify for the status, I.M. Yassin, et.al (2011) note that it must have verified information regarding its research activities and outputs. This information must then be entered into the MyRA assessment tool to generate a research score indicating whether the university qualifies to become RU.

For audit and assessment purposes, data provided by the librarians is related to Section C: Quantity and Quality of Research which measures the research output of the university consist of:

a)	Publications
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Total number of publications in SCOPUS / WOS / ERA indexed journals ii. Total number of publications in SCOPUS / WOS / ERA indexed conference proceedings iii. Joint publications;
b)	Publication Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Total citation of publications ii. Number of articles published in Q1 and Q2 journals Percentage of publications in Q1 and Q2 journals
c)	Total numbers of publications in other journals and
f)	Other publications.

All data prepared must comply to the glossary provided by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). Massive amount of information needs to be searched, compiled, deposited and verified hence they need to be arranged in an organized and orderly manner in order to enable their addition, retrieval and analysis. The data will be analyzed and used by the top management as a guide for forming strategic plans in developing the University and bringing Malaysian tertiary education to a higher level.

As we know, generated data from research that is not prepared and stored for long-term access is at risk of being lost forever (Perrier, 2017). In supporting the assessment, data compilation and archiving activities, USM Library has created a new unit called Research Data Management Unit in February 2018 to focus on the research data management area with the objective to develop Open Data Hub to provide academic research datas for Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). This unit will be a section for research data management focusing on organizing Publication Data and Research Data. Among the tactical steps that will be strategized include the implementation of policy on data sharing for interdisciplinary research; reward on publication; research on Intellectual Property protection; Open Data Definition and Development of Open Data Management System (ODMS). An Organization-based life cycle models will be created to support the conceptualization, implementation, and communication of a library's data services. It will involve in activities and process associated with the data lifecycle involving the design and creation of data, storage, security, preservation, retrieval, sharing, and reuse which recognized as the librarians' skills over the years (Stang, 2016).

However, the work also poses significant challenges for librarians. Usually, librarians have focused their attention on serving the needs of their patrons as information consumers. Providing support to researchers in applying data science to their work requires that librarians understand and respond not only to researchers' needs as consumers of data, but as data producers as well. Acquiring this kind of understanding means librarians need to connect with researchers throughout the research process rather than focusing solely on the formal products of research such as books, articles, etc. They need to make or find the time for these activities in otherwise full and busy schedules and heavy workloads. They also need to learn new skills and establish credibility with researchers (Ray, 2014).

Interest in research data management in the global community is on the rise and libraries become natural hubs for services that support preparation of data management plans, fulfilling data management obligations, and citing the products that result from research projects. As librarians are increasingly involved in showcasing their institutions' expertise and experts, promoting and supporting the sharing of open data, managing repositories and curating research data, professional development will need to keep up to work out the plans.

Conclusion:

Collaboration between academic libraries and external organizations on campus and in the community has increased in popularity and is likely to stay. As Wildridge et al. (2004) conclude, working effectively in partnership is crucial for library and information services now and will remain so for the foreseeable future. It is therefore essential that we develop professional librarians with the appropriate mind-set and required skills to engage in fruitful collaborative service delivery. Once libraries decide to collaborate, they must wholeheartedly commit to the partnership. "Real change requires real change," says David Lewis, Dean of the University Library at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, in "A Strategy for Academic Libraries in the First Quarter of the 21st Century" (College & Research Libraries). "Incremental adjustments at the margins will not suffice; alterations in fundamental practice will be needed." Jim Neal, Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian at Columbia University, suggests that libraries need 'radical collaboration' that goes far beyond what they have attempted so far. "We must go to a point when we have collaborated so tightly there is no going back and the only rational way forward is to continue to work together."

It is a known fact that the challenges for libraries and higher education will remain overwhelming. However, there is a conception that if we don't join in creating the future, we may find that the future will not include us. Therefore it is important for libraries to work together collaboratively, seize and capitalize on opportunities available to place the library at the center of academic and scholarly mission of the university.

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