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BOOK REVIEWS

***Building A Digital Library at the University of Zimbabwe: A Celebration of Teamwork and Collaboration.* INASP, Oxford: United Kingdom, 2007**

Reviewed by Tonderayi Chanakira
Institute of Mining Research Librarian, University of Zimbabwe

This is the second volume to be published by the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI). Dr Buhle Mbambo-Thata a former librarian of the University of Zimbabwe Library went through the process of digitalizing its services by incorporating the concept of Information communication Technologies (ICTs) to benefit students, lecturers and the academic community at large. The process of automating the functions of the University Main Library and its five branches is traced from 1982 to 2006. In this respect, the various authors who contributed the seven chapters which constitute this publication narrate of the University of Zimbabwe's vision was the guiding principle behind this project.

What makes this publication a must read for those associated with the academia is that it is written from a practical point of view by qualified librarians with vast experience in the field who actually experienced the digitalization process of the UZ library. The publication is, therefore, a case study which other university libraries in developing countries can draw upon as reference, should they want to digitalize their library functions through incorporating ICTs. The publication also brings into perspective how University of Zimbabwe librarians teamed up with university lecturers and UZ management in introducing the concept of Information Literacy Skills (ILS) as a new mode of learning at the University of Zimbabwe. Information Literacy Skills learning now constitutes a part of the University of Zimbabwe's curriculum and this has benefited students who graduate from the university campus as "computer literate". A new teaching method classified as "e-learning" is also dealt with in this publication as an offspring of ICTs and learning. This new learning concept has benefited university stakeholders who are now informed on how they can use such ICT concepts as the Internet, Web pages, e-mailing and the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) to assist them in their research work.

The authors also give the various challenges that faced the University Library in its automation and digitalization revolution. Computer phobia is one of the major challenges that the UZ library faced in its quest to bring its stakeholders on board regarding digitalizing its services for the benefit of clients. This challenge came from both the university lecturers and students, particularly those whose backgrounds lacked computer literacy skills. The publication touches on what not to do when a university library embarks on digitalization. The failure of the Erudite System, which was adopted by the UZ library as a pilot automation project, is also in point.

The publication highlights the problematic issues regarding academic publishing using the World Wide Web, particularly with regard to copyright issues. In the case of the University of Zimbabwe Library, the academia was reluctant to fully participate in some of the digitization projects because they were legally bound to their publishers and as such felt not obliged to have their articles published on OPAC.

The major strength of this publication is that it can be used as a model in digitalizing university libraries in developing countries in that the authors who actually experienced the process of library automation in a university setting give practical examples. However, the missing links in this publication are the students and lecturers. The views of these stakeholders are not included in the publication and yet they are the major stakeholders who constitute the major purpose on why this publication was written. One chapter by a lecturer and another one by a university student highlighting their own experiences on the digitalization of the UZ library would have added more nourishment to this publication. On the whole, the publication is a pleasure to read and shows how team spirit and enthusiasm can turn a manual system of operating a university library into one whose outlook is now user friendly because of the introduction of ICTs. This is a must read for those associated with the academia.

The publication can be ordered through: INASP, 60 St Aldates, Oxford OX1 St, UK, Tel: +44 1865 249909, Fax +441865 251060, E-mail: inasp@inasp.info



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