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ENHANCING RESEARCH CAPACITY OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS: THE CASE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES, HOCHIMINH CITY, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of librarians' research status and some solutions for enhancing the research capacity of librarians in Library and Information Centre, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hochiminh city, Vietnam

Methodology – A survey is conducted with some librarians at the Library and Information Centre, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hochiminh city.

Findings – The paper analyzes the research status of librarians at different aspects such as research motivation, types of research outputs, research scope/ topic, some advantages as well as obstacles in research of the librarians.

Research limitations/implications – This paper focuses on analyzing the research status of librarians at Library and Information Centre, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hochiminh city.

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives of study

This paper aims to conduct the following objectives:

- To provide the overall picture of research status of librarians at University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hochiminh city
- To analyze the advantages and obstacles that librarians encountered in research activities
- Then, to propose some solutions for enhancing the research status of librarians at University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hochiminh city

Research questions

Answering these following questions to achieve the aims of the study:

- Analyzing the role of scientific research; motivation of research, types and subjects of research outputs; advantages and disadvantages of librarians' research status

- Proposing some solutions for developing the research status of the librarians at Library and Information Centre, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hochiminh city, Vietnam

LITERATURE REVIEW

There were some papers which were concerned the research activities of librarians were presented at various aspects. Mary Jo Lynch (1984) analyzed the meanings of research, presented four types of research including practical research, bibliographical research, scholarly research, and scientific research, and emphasized on the role of library and research librarian in supporting library users' research activities. Another research was conducted by Tony I. Obaseki, Salisu Dasuki Ibrahim, Juliet N. Momoh analyzed some factors that inhibit research in librarianship. Prakash Dongardive (2013) represented the historical and future perspective, professional associations and agencies engaged in library science research as well as research methods which being used in Library and information science.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Some methods are used to conduct this paper.

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- Analyzing literature is aimed to find the theory of scientific research in Library and Information Science
- Individual interview is conducted with managers, librarians with the aim of investigating the advantages and disadvantages of librarians’ research activities and putting forward some feasible solutions to improve the quality of the librarians’ research status.

Limitations of the study

Library and Information Centre is one of libraries which belong to library system of Vietnam National University, Hochiminh city. However, this paper only focused on surveying in Library and Information Centre, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hochiminh city. A survey was conducted to investigate the status of the librarians’ scientific research including the number of research outputs and advantages, difficulties in conducting research of the librarians.

FINDINGS

The roles of scientific research for librarians

One of important factors creates effectiveness of library and information centers is librarians. At present, most of managers have policies, strategies to improve the quality of librarian staff by many different methods. In fact, there are many criteria for evaluating the qualifications of librarians which include the level of qualifications, experiences, and years of working, quality and effectiveness of library services. Besides, scientific research is also crucial factors for evaluating the librarians. To evaluate the research capacity of the librarians, it is necessary to base on research outputs such as theses, articles, scientific reports or master theses. The fact is that scientific research of the librarians has many limitations. Most of librarians conduct research as their responsibility in works or study.

Scientific research is a process to satisfy the needs of reorganization and reformation the reality which uses scientific methods, critical thinking for discovering the phenomena, rules. Basing on that, conducting research helps in improving the level of knowledge to solve the reality and theory. Also, research in Library and Information Science plays a very crucial role in the professional activities of librarians, special in academic librarians.

First, supporting in professional activities is an important role for librarians in their workplace. In fact, the professional mission is basic mission of every librarian. In order to improve the qualification level, librarians could take part in some short or long term courses, conferences, training courses, seminars. Besides, self learning and self research are other ways to improve their qualifications. Among that, research activities require librarians to find out, solve many existing problems in the reality, and suggest some reasonable solutions with the aim of narrowing the distance between reality and theory.

The second role of scientific research in Library and Information Science is supporting in teaching activities at training facilities. There is the fact that, many librarians also

are responsible for teaching some courses or subjects at universities, schools, other libraries. To improve the effect of teaching, librarians should be satisfied some compulsory requirements of any lecturers which include qualifications, skills of teaching, stimulating learners and even the ability of research. Thus, scientific research activities will contribute in supporting teaching activity as well as research activity. It brings lecturer-librarian the opportunities to contact deeply many concerned issues at various aspects of research.

The last but not least, research by the librarians is to create new knowledge and then contribute to the development of library and information science. Through research activities, they could improve skills of solving the problems in their workplace.

An overview of librarian staff and the research status of librarians at Library and Information Centre

Total number of librarians at Library and Information Centre is 31 librarians in whom there are 2 managers who are responsible for general activities of library and 29 librarians who conduct their professional missions. This is shown clearly in the following table.

Level/ Major	Major of Library and Information Science		Major of Information Technology		Other	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Master	3	9.68	0	0.0	0	0.0
Bachelor	25	80.65	1	3.2	0	0.0
Other	0	0.00	0	0.0	2	6.5
Total	28	90.32	1	3.2	2	6.5

The table shows that 90.32% of librarians have major of Library and Information Science while there is only one librarian who has major of Information Technology. Particularly, there are only 3 librarians who have master degree (9.68%) and up to 80.65% of librarians have bachelor of art in Library and Information Science. In general, most of librarians at the Library and Information Center are learners who graduate from the major of Library and Information Science.

Being a library related directly to satisfy users’ information needs including managers, staffs, lecturers, students, and other users, Library and Information Centre. These days, the research status of librarians has not been concerned at libraries, information centres. It is easy to see from the results of survey at Library and Information Centre. Number of research papers such as theses, articles, research reports, and conference writings is very little. From 2010 to present, according to the results of survey, there were only 5 papers which were published on national professional journals and 3 theses were fulfilled as their compulsory condition to graduate master programs. Furthermore, these papers which were one of problems related to their theses were corporate to other authors.

Another prominent feature of research activity of librarians is that most of research outputs were conducted by teaching-librarians who teach at education facilities in library and information science; and post graduates whose their mission is conducting graduate theses. Moreover, some librarians are

responsible for their research outputs as co-authors with other authors, special in publishing on professional journals or taking part in theses, projects of organizations.

Advantages and disadvantages of librarians' scientific research

There are many advantages of the librarians' research activities. The first advantage is that the university's policy has encouraged to conduct research through the finance support. In fact, the university has policy of finance support for the papers which are published on international and national journals including article processing fees, the published research outputs. Moreover, the university also supports the librarians to take part in professional conferences. Furthermore, every librarian who fulfills the master thesis conducts research as a compulsory requirement of program. Sometimes, they create the research outputs such as papers on professional journals or conferences.

While there also have some obstacles for the librarians to conduct research. One of disadvantages of librarians' research is that they have not evaluated highly effect of research activities in their work. They believed that sometimes research activities do not contribute indeed to their works. Moreover, although the librarians have good and adequate capacity of professional missions, they have lack of skills and methodology of scientific research. They do not know how to conduct a research effectively. Besides, most of librarians have no time to conduct research because they spend much time on their working place. For the librarians, spending 8 hours and more at the Library and Information Centre takes much their time while research activities take a lot of time to conduct effectively.

Furthermore, language skill of reading English materials is also one of the remarkable difficulties for the librarians to research in library and information field. In fact, there are many English reference resources which the librarians could use; however, it is very hard for them to read and use. This contributes to create the last important obstacle is that the librarians have no ideas for research. Therefore, research status of the librarians have much limitations which should be had many feasible solutions with the aim of enhancing the librarians' research status at the Library and Information Centre in particular, and at many various library in general in Hochiminh city.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving recognition of managers, librarians about the roles of scientific research for the reality

Recognizing the roles of research is the first requirement for the librarians to conduct research. In fact, the academic librarians should master the roles of scientific research activities in professional activities, teaching. However, it is necessary thing for the managers in library and information centre to define the importance of research in librarians. This leads to create many policies for the librarians to conduct research.

Taking part actively in the research activities

To evaluate the effectiveness of the librarians' research capacity, it is important to consider the quality of research

outputs, the quantity as well diversity of research outputs. The librarians could conduct research activities through some ways. Firstly, conducting theses which organized by the university or other organizations is considered one of effective ways to improve the capacity of the librarians' research activities. Secondly, there are some librarians who study the master program; conducting research as their theses is considered the first step for them to get acquainted with scientific research. The results of theses were marked by the scientific council presented partly the research capacity of the librarians. In this case, completing the master theses requires much effort of every librarian. Thus, choosing the suitable theses for the needs of reality, the ability of each librarians and the feasibility of problems would be necessary to the librarians. Thirdly, writing papers for international and national professional journals, speeches for the conferences is also the way to improve the research capacity of the librarians effectively. The librarians could ask for advice of the experienced librarians, researchers; reviewing literature as well as evaluating the needs of the reality is to define the problems which would be analyzed in their research.

Co-ordinating with experienced lecturers, librarians in Library and Information Science Research

They could cooperate to other experienced librarians or lecturers inside and outside of the library and information centre to conduct the research. They could be responsible for writing papers, theses as co-author. These processes of corporation will bring the chances for the librarians to accumulate the experiences, new knowledge as well as stimulate the ability of identifying and evaluating the problems under their better own point of views.

Establishing the supporting policy for librarians' scientific research activities

The research activities would be much concerned by the librarians if each library and information centre has policies for encouraging and supporting the librarians in research activities. At the annual evaluation, library and information centre could consider and choose the results of research as one of prominent criteria of evaluation for the librarians. This method would contribute for the librarians to take part in the research activities with the active behavior. Moreover, these policies should be concerned to support in time of research, budget for conducting research and even for good research outputs.

Academic exchange with various ways

Beside the above solutions, the librarians should follow actively and take part in the scientific conferences, seminars in order to exchange thoughts, ideas, and the problems in the reality. Based on that, the librarians could conduct the feasible theses which were applied in the librarians' workplaces.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To sum up, only when the librarians have real awareness of the roles of scientific research activities in their professional reality, they should take part in actively the research activities as well as the academic exchange activities; co-ordinate in

research activities with other experienced librarians and lecturers. Moreover, each of library and information centre should have policies to encourage for librarians take part in the research activities as a criterion for evaluating librarians' professional achievement. Paralleling to above solutions along with specific measures would contribute to improve the effectiveness of the librarians' research status. It is a great meaning for belief that the research activities are the missions and responsibility not only of professional researchers, lecturers, but of the librarians, whom make great contributions to quality of library and information centre indeed.

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