

وجهة نظر المكتبيين الأكاديميين حول مشاعات التعلم ومكتبات المستقبل: الحالة الكويتية

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ملخص: إن جعل المكتبات أماكن مريحة وجذابة للقراءة والبحث عن المعلومات يشكل مصدر قلق كبير لأمناء المكتبات في جميع أنحاء العالم. ومع الانتشار السريع للإنترنت و مصادر المعلومات الإلكترونية التي يمكن الوصول إليها من أي مكان مجاناً أو بتكلفة قليلة ازداد الشك عند أمناء المكتبات بشأن مستقبل هذه المكتبات، فجوهر المسألة هو كيف يمكن إقناع المستخدمين بالعودة إلى المكتبة، وكيف يمكن أن تتطور المكتبة في المستقبل وتبقى محافظة على وظائفها الأصلية في الوقت نفسه.

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تعرف وجهة نظر أمناء المكتبات الأكاديمية في الكويت في إيجاد مشاعات التعلم واستكشاف مواقفهم تجاه تغيير المجالات التقليدية في المكتبات الأكاديمية واتجاهاتها المستقبلية.

صممت استبانة خاصة وأرسلت إلى 36 أميناً من أمناء المكتبات الأكاديمية في الكويت، فاستجاب 32 منهم للاستبانة وشاركوا في الدراسة. وقد بلغ معدل الاستجابة 89. وقد قسمت الاستبانة إلى ستة أقسام تهدف إلى توفير الإجابات وتحقيق أهداف الدراسة.

أظهرت النتائج أن أمناء المكتبات الأكاديمية أعطوا أهمية كبيرة للبحوث والأنشطة المرتبطة بها في المكتبة ومشاعات التعلم. كما أعطوا أهمية معتدلة إلى مرافق المكتبة وراحة المستخدمين. من ناحية أخرى أعطوا أهمية قليلة للترفيه عن المستخدمين (مقهى وغرفة تلفزيون ودور سينما ومسارح). وقد أشارت هذه النتائج إلى أن أمناء

المكتبات الأكاديمية في الكويت لا يزالون ينظرون إلى المكتبة مكاناً جاداً للدراسة وإجراء البحوث. وهم يرون مرافق الترفيه عن المستخدمين انحرافات عن الأهداف الرئيسية للمكتبة الأكاديمية.

المصطلحات الأساسية: مباني المكتبات، تصميم المكتبات، استخدام المكتبات، مشاعات التعلم، وظائف المكتبات.

Academic Librarians' Perspectives on Learning Commons and Libraries of the Future: The Kuwaiti Case

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Abstract: Making libraries comfortable and attractive places for reading and searching for information has been a matter of considerable concern for librarians worldwide. With the widespread of the Internet and electronic information resources that are accessible from home at practically no or low cost, some librarians are becoming increasingly skeptical about the future of libraries. The crux of the matter is how to convince users to return to the library, and how the library can evolve while still preserving its original functions. The current study aims to understand Kuwaiti academic librarians' pursuit for creating learning commons and explore their attitudes towards changing physical landscapes in academic libraries and its future direction. A questionnaire was designed and sent to 36 academic librarians in Kuwait, 32 responded and participated in the study with a response rate of 89%. The questionnaire was divided into six sections aiming to provide answers and meet the objectives of the study.

Results show that academic librarians gave great importance to research and its related activities in the library and learning commons. They also gave moderate importance to the facilities

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and comfort of the users. On the other hand, they gave little importance to users' entertainment (cafés, TV rooms, cinemas, and theatres). These results indicate that academic librarians in Kuwait still see the library as a serious place to study and conduct research, and they see entertainment facilities as distractions from the main objectives of learning and the academic library.

Key words: Library Buildings, Library Facilities, Library Users, Library Design, Library Commons, Library Functionality.

Introduction

Libraries and information centers have been adopting the concept of learning commons LC, which is a concept that capitalizes on openness, group discussion, meeting places and technology incorporation in order to create more collaborative learning experiences (Sinclair, 2009). Whether this can be achieved using architecture or resources is increasingly becoming a question for debate regarding the future of libraries. Whether to include it as a service unit and exclude it as a design concept is also a legitimate question. Furthermore, it brings to the forefront the old entrenched democratic notion of the library, 'change or stay', and the question of whether technology will push it further toward this mentality or away from it (Rizzo, 2002).

The Internet has increasingly become a part of the daily lives of people the world over. A wide range of information is available on the Web, and published scholarly articles are easily accessed through databases. Some believe that in the near future, library buildings will become obsolete, due to the electronic availability of online and digital information resources that allow users to access content without physically going to the library. Library advocates, however, believe that libraries will always exist and will never become obsolete. They believe libraries will always have a crucial role to play in an information society and that they can evolve into attractive and comfortable spaces that encourage users to stay longer (Shill & Tonner, 2004). In lieu of this the study of library atmospheres is a central topic of library marketing. It affects how library users view services, collections, buildings, systems, and the role of the library in society (Hohman, 2006).

Designers and architects of library buildings work with colors, furniture and design to add a home-like environment to the library and encourage users to visit it (MacDonald, 2007). Library designers need to understand the relationships between the three main components of a library: customers, staff, and library products. Providing proactive library

services requires careful examinations of current capabilities, users' needs, and environments where they will be satisfied with the content and services. A mechanism to monitor the changing needs of users becomes essential as libraries move to an innovative system that will provide new services and advance current ones (Ritchie & Ray, 2008). However, the move toward new library commons and new library services cannot be achieved without the understanding and involvement of professional librarians who will be the key players in this new environment.

The study at hand is multi-exploratory and seeks to understand Kuwaiti academic librarians' pursuit for creating learning commons LC. It furthermore attempts to explore academic librarians' attitudes towards changing physical landscapes in academic libraries, and its future direction in an attempt to advocate the learning commons and librarians' serious involvement in the planning of academic libraries of the future.

Review of Related Literature

Access paradigm and effects of the technological revolution

The digital revolution has changed the physical appearance of today's libraries entirely. Traditionally, books and other printed material constituted the bulk of any library's products. Today information is abundantly available in a variety of formats. As researchers are concerned about the possible obsolescence of the physical library, many studies have been conducted on new trends in designing library buildings that are intended to encourage users to visit them frequently. These new trends involve considerations such as the library site, aesthetics, interiors and exteriors, and design, as well as continuing attention to space utilization and library materials that render libraries more attractive and eventually help users form positive perceptions of them (MacDonald, 2007).

Donald Beagle, a strong advocate of the LC's notion, spent most of his working career looking at the evolution of learning commons. He wrote extensively about it. His article of 1999 sets the ground for studies by himself and others to any discussion of the LC in an academic setting. He describes the "strategic fit (in terms of organizational/administrative integration (1999)". In *Extending the Information Commons IC*, Donald Beagle (2002) wonders about the expanding deserted library phenomena. His article "proposed the IC as a subordinate unit within the library, whose individual identity would permit special adaptations to the new digital environment. It would also serve as a sensing mechanism for

gathering data about that environment and how students and faculty were utilizing it. Finally it would be a "test-bed" for experiential collaboration with other campus units supporting instruction and research."

In planning library environment, a main concern should be creating a learning environment. As learning habits and environments are changing, so does the academic library's traditional setting in the academic environment. The importance of the concept of collaboration in instruction as Donald Beagle sees it will continue to increase as libraries and education continue to transform. Beagle visited this concept again in a 2010 article "The emergent Information Common" in which he builds more on his previous concepts of the essence of the IC as a flexible enjoyable environment that allows students more control and an educational experience that is in synergy with the unprecedented technological diversion that lead to the Information Commons IC or Learning commons LC. The article furthermore cites how the concept has been increasingly evolving in the literature in the past decade. "Integrative learning" as a concept is explored where learning is more interdisciplinary. Beagle asserts that "we can anticipate that pressures for efficient internal collaboration and collocation will increase. To the extent that IC and LC continue to be effective conduits through which fluid, adaptive organizational learning processes can flow, it seems reasonable to anticipate that they will be vital components of the libraries of the future (Beagle, 2010)".

Librarians as Educators

The Information Power document was first published in 1988 then updated (American Association of School Librarians & Association of Educational Communication and technology, 1998) emphasized collaboration, technology change and leadership in the school Learning Resource Centers. Its concepts, which are still central to services of LRCs, generally seem to re-emerge emphasizing its basic elements in educational settings by large and academic colleges and universities. We are still in "a transformative" period that Beagle (2000) predicts, yet the ability to adapt is more crucial than before. Bailey & Tierney (2002) reviewed the IC concept and its administrative and functional implications in the academic environment. Their article explained in details the concept and what it involved clearly "The Information Commons, consisting of Instructional, Media, Reference, and Research Data Services, seeks to meet the

informational needs of its primary patrons, who are, at once, undergraduates (80 + %; 15,000), graduates, and the faculty who teach them”.

“The mission of the Library’s Information Commons is to integrate in design and function the Library’s: (1) spaces, (2) informational resources, (3) technological resources, (4) production resources, and (5) support services in such a fashion that patrons experience a seamless environment for contemplating, planning, re-searching, and bringing to finished product their academic, intellectual and, at times, personal work. The Information Commons intends to accomplish its mission in close collaboration with Access and Outreach Services, Library Systems, other Library units, and the Faculty Center for Teaching” (Bailey & Tierney (2002). Problems that might arise can be summed up in terms of “typical constraints of budget unpredictability, extending and restructuring staff assignments, and reorienting staff and patrons to new service patterns, [which] could have created intractable impediments to implementation” (Bailey & Tierney (2002).

Academic libraries face continuous pressure to change. Edwards, Jackson, and Wilkins (2006) published a report on the Society for College, National and University Libraries’ (SCONUL) visit to the University of Glasgow Library and the Glasgow Caledonian University Saltire Center. They summarize some key issues in library design and construction intended to meet users’ needs. The report stresses that academic libraries should have learning spaces and take into consideration many aspects, such as the strategic vision of the university, the availability of wireless and flexible technology, and digital resources. Space should also be more social and inclusive to enable collaborative learning, and the library should have a separate heating system from other buildings. The emphasis of the report is on designing new buildings that are more attractive to researchers in order to encourage them to spend more time in libraries.

Pitman (2007) conducted a case study to describe the processes involved in an academic library-building project, including choice of site, appointment of architects, choice of interior and exterior design of the building, and collections. He found that it is extremely important to involve library staff in all aspects of the design, especially in decisions about internal layout and adaptability of library staff to unusual and difficult working conditions, such as the location of reference and circulation desks and the placement of library staff offices.

Libraries are increasingly becoming hybrid institutions that offer varied material resources and experiences and consequently increasing literature is being produced and published. Latimer and Niegaard (2007) emphasize the transformation of the library's focus from collection to connection and from ownership to access (p. 9). MacDonald (2007) states that institutions have chosen to give libraries new names that reflect their changing roles, names that accommodate technology advancements and modern education trends. Examples are "learning centers, learning resource centers, learning streets, learning hubs, learning malls, learning grids, research villages, idea stores, book bars, and cultural centers (MacDonald, 2007, p. 13)". MacDonald's top ten qualities for spaces that are people-centered, not collection-centered include:

- Functional - Space works well, looks good, and lasts.
- Accessible - Inviting social space that allows independent use, including access for the disabled.
- Conducive - High-quality warm space that inspires and motivates.
- Environmentally suitable - spaces for computers, users, and books.
- Efficient - cost-effective spaces, staffing, and operations.
- Suitable for information technology - Efficient, aesthetics, and noise reduction.

Hohmann (2006) summarizes trends that revolve around access, guidance, communication, and an inspiring work environment. He emphasizes taking into consideration the following design principles:

- Easy access to all media available at the library
- Avenues for both formal and informal communication between staff and clients,
- Attractive and comfortable environments
- Sustainable design, structures and appliances

Khan (2009) emphasizes the concepts of collaboration and integration. Collaboration should take place between different stakeholders and library patrons, and should involve the integration of different services, including varied materials other than books. Furthermore, he stresses the importance of making the library as pleasing a space as possible, without compromising service and efficiency. He proposes allocating space for different functions, yet also having these spaces relate to each other.

According to Sinclair (2009), a blended librarian concentrates on the

combined role of librarian and educator, using all the elements of the educational tools and media of 21st century education. The blended librarian's role includes the traditional role of keeping printed material, but it surpasses this to incorporate the latest technology and its various tools and the skills to use them. Librarians need to be early promoters, adopters and users of technology on campus; they must partner with faculty, and transform the reference desk into a blended education area that is staffed with people who are knowledgeable about technology and make it a central area in the learning commons. They need to recruit and encourage students who are proficient at using technology, and librarians need to be present for individual and group consultations.

The debate over whether the inclusion of non-book materials and activities means the death of libraries has been addressed by many researchers. Begg (2009) examined space utilization in some new generation public libraries for non-book materials. In these libraries, new computer workstations, printers and photocopy machines, and cafés have replaced bookshelves. His investigation concluded that the inclusion of non-book space is not a new trend in library buildings, and books still have a significant role in public libraries. He emphasized that the increased addition of non-book spaces is an added value to public libraries. It provides an opportunity to diversify the attraction of library materials in a way that challenges past assumptions.

Inclusion of non-book materials and activities has pushed some library designers and architects to include "social community spaces". In response to concern about the inclusion of social community space for collaborative and independent learning, the Art, Media and Design Library at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore was designed to have metal benches between shelves for users to sit while browsing the collection, group reading areas with large tables, and attractive and large movable seats of various sizes and shapes. The library also has mini cinemas able to accommodate up to 19 users for film projections, and outside the cinema, five to six-seat areas with large LCD monitors are enclosed for small group use. To investigate the impact of these areas on the perceptions of library users, Anandasivam and Cheong (2008) conducted a study using a simple questionnaire followed by face-to-face interviews to solicit feedback from staff and students on their impressions of the new library during the initial period after its opening. They found

that the library users were affected by the physical environment of the library, particularly aesthetics, seating, and availability of facilities, and affirmed that these new designs influenced the positive perceptions users had of their library.

Flexible and Inviting Library Design

Ritchie and Ray (2008) highlighted the experience of The American University of Sharjah (AUS) in building a new library. As a means of benchmarking best practice in space and building design, AUS librarians were sent to the USA and Canada to visit a wide range of academic libraries. Feedback was sought from the campus community on their goals for the final design of the library. The library was planned to include classrooms equipped with computers, an information common area, and quiet group and individual study areas. Busy, active, and loud areas were placed on the ground floor, and quieter areas on the top floor. The building includes a bookstore, café, videoconference classroom, student study hall and 24-hour multipurpose room. Ritchie and Ray (2008) found that students' attainment of core information literacy skills can be facilitated and enhanced through this type of library facility design, particularly through the careful placement of instruction classrooms and a central computing or information commons area. They concluded that the library classrooms and adjacent information commons are key components in facilitating student information literacy skills and encouraging students to use the library frequently.

Rizzo (2002) stated that designing libraries to include multi-purpose facilities is a good way to promote library use among a community of users. He highlighted the distinction between changing functional requirements that are addressed with space programming, and the social and emotional needs of a community that are realized through the design of space. Rizzo's paper presented some typical examples of providing ideas and recommendations for professional librarians and architects, emphasizing the entertainment section of the design with features such as cinemas, theatres, cafés and bookstores. On the other hand, he believed that unless the library atmosphere was attractive to users, and unless reading areas were quiet and calm, users would not come to the library.

With the purpose of sharing information and best practices with academic libraries developing their own commons, Spencer (2007)

documented the experience of North Carolina State University (NCSU) in creating its libraries' Learning Commons (LC) which were designed to have diversified facilities, including open computer workstations, group and individual study areas, presentation rooms and large plasma TV screens to introduce users to the facilities. The facilities aim to make the commons a comfortable place for learning. Spencer stated that creative design of space, technology resources, and services make academic libraries central to the learning and research process. His paper is an example of how to encourage academic libraries to rethink their role in the learning process. The paper contains practical information about technology trends in academic libraries. It is of particular use to libraries planning renovations projects.

Flexibility in Design

A Web survey conducted by Shill and Tonner (2004) in early 2003 examined the impact of library improvements on the use of physical facilities. Taking into consideration current concerns about the future of physical libraries, Shill and Tonner (2004) found that in order for new libraries to survive, their buildings should be built in a way that accommodates library and non-library materials, such as computer workstations, conference rooms, and multimedia centers. The authors offered some constructive recommendations for library facility planning in which they emphasized the participation of librarians and architects in designing aesthetically pleasing environments in academic libraries.

Waxman et al. (2007) investigated the spaces that constitute the "third place", after home and office, for students to gather and develop communities at the Florida State University campus. The students interviewed their friends about their favorite places on campus and the factors that contributed to their selection of those places. In addition, the research team observed students in library settings and interviewed library administrators. The majority of students in this research study (80%) indicated that their third favorite place was off-campus, such as coffee shops and restaurants where they socialized and relaxed away from the pressures of academic life. Design features of their favorite places, such as wood flooring, comfortable chairs, and furniture are other factors that contributed to their choice of a third place. This paper argues that academic institutions can make use of these attributes in designing new

building or renovating existing libraries in order to create an environment that encourages students to “hang out.”

Demas and Scherer (2002) believe that the increased number of users at American libraries has to do with the sense of place users feel. They assume that “the physical library building, when designed and maintained with place-making in mind, serves as vital agent in community building”, and thus brings people together to create a community that shares civic and educational values. They recommended inclusion of areas in libraries in order to give them a sense of “esprit of place”, such as reading and study places, collaborative workplaces, learning and teaching places, technology-free zones, cultural event venues, and age-specific areas. They concluded that to provide “transcendent” spaces in libraries, these spaces should be diversified, multipurpose, and attractive.

Starkweather and Marks (2005) conducted a study on the factors associated with the use of library facilities in a newly renovated library. They assert that for the library to continue to matter in the lives of its users, it must continue to adapt to its campus context. The library should collaborate successfully with campus partners and respond effectively to the constantly changing context of information delivery and knowledge promotion.

Swanepoel and Swanepoel (2010) observed the layout, functionality and interior of a public library in South Africa, and highlighted some shortcomings in the interior design. When a new project to design the library was undertaken, library staff members were not given the opportunity to participate in the planning, and little attention was paid to the interior design of the library. The new design was not very aesthetically pleasing, not very functional, and it was uninspiring to use. The authors hypothesized that this would certainly affect the use of the library, as it would not be attractive to users and eventually they would form a negative impression of it. To resolve this, the two authors suggested a more attractive and eye-catching design, and recommended that in order for the library to inspire users and guarantee their return, the interior should be redesigned in a way that promotes and facilitates access, is inviting, and allows users to easily find their way to library services. They furthermore proposed a functional layout appropriate for a high-tech library.

Noon (2008) treats the library as a physical place that still needs to be used, in spite of the non-physical high technology features that modern libraries offer. He describes how flexibility was built into the Lanchester

Library building to enable library services to evolve in response to continuously changing user needs. This particular library building has attracted a great deal of attention for its sustainable energy features, and other aspects of sustainability. The power and network infrastructure and the configuration of library space were made flexible to ensure the library services continue to evolve. Noon also highlighted the fact that the architecture of the building needs to conform to the conventional view of the library as a place, and this was successfully achieved by creating an inviting attractive building where students return because they like it. Noon concludes that the flexibility built into the design of the library building has made all the above mentioned features possible, and has made the library services relevant to the continuously changing needs of the users. This research argues that academic institutions can make use of these attributes in designing new buildings or renovating existing libraries in order to create an environment that encourages students to hangout.

Research Statement

Kuwait University was established in 1966 as the first national research university in the state of Kuwait. It grew to house seventeen different academic colleges in various disciplines by the year 2013. Kuwait University Libraries Administration (KULA) is responsible for administering the eight faculty university libraries. The technical divisions tackle acquisitions and cataloging processes centrally, while service is left to individual libraries of the various colleges. According to Kuwait university site, the whole collection is 267,912 Arabic titles and 393,563 English titles. It also includes 1233 original manuscripts and 14,885 manuscripts on microfiche/microfilm, reference materials, dissertations and reports in different branches of knowledge (Kuwait University - Libraries Administration, n.d.,).

In Kuwait, as elsewhere, Kuwaiti academic librarians have to deal with new challenges brought to the forefront by the increasing diversion of technology. New technology savvy students come to universities with different expectations from the facilities and resources too. What would make future university libraries inviting and functional to this generation is a challenge to academic librarians worldwide.

Currently, Kuwait University has six different campuses. Each campus houses two or three colleges. A decision to build a new campus that will host all the colleges, administrative buildings, and a central

library is underway. In 2010 a group of scholars from Kuwait University went on a tour of seven university campuses in the USA. The group included deans, department heads, and senior faculty members who visited the universities to observe among other things their buildings, offices, classrooms, computer labs, and libraries. The group recommended among other things having learning common in the central library with computer stations, electric outlets for laptops, tablet PCs and smart phones in addition to photocopiers and a bookstore with souvenir items such as mugs, shirts, jackets and hats. Based on that project the time was ripe to seek academic librarians' opinion regarding learning commons and the library of the future.

The holdings of Kuwait University Libraries includes subscriptions of 64 databases and E-Books, an audio-visual collection of approximately 20,000 items, a manuscript collection of approximately 1273 originals and 16,607 copy. The Online Catalog (OPAC) includes bibliographic records of Arabic and foreign books and periodicals of all disciplines ("Kuwait University - Libraries Administration", n.d.).

The last decade has witnessed a mushrooming of private high education institutions to fulfill the growing needs of graduating high school students. Consequently, the Private Universities' Council (PUC) of the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE) of Kuwait was established according to the by-law no, 34 of 2000, as a government institution, to oversee the forming and licensing of private higher education institutions in Kuwait. As of March 2013, 8 working institutions have been established. All working private institutions have state of the art collections and facilities to support their academic operations. The study at hand is a descriptive analysis of academic librarians' awareness of the continuously changing academic library environment and its multifaceted services in Kuwait.

Aims and Objectives

The current study aims to understand Kuwaiti academic librarians' pursuit for creating learning commons LC. It furthermore attempts to explore academic librarians' attitudes towards changing physical landscapes in academic libraries, and its future direction in an attempt to advocate the learning commons and librarians' serious involvement in the planning of academic libraries of the future.

The objectives of the study are:

- 1 - To explore the objectives of building a learning commons from the viewpoint of the participating academic librarians.
- 2 - To determine the facilities that should be included in the learning commons.
- 3 - To seek librarians' opinions of the learning commons' location, design, interiors, and comfort.
- 4 - To identify the factors that negatively affect academic library services.
- 5 - To clarify librarians' personal opinions about how to make the new library attractive to users.

Methodology

A questionnaire, written and constructed in English was emailed to 36 academic librarians between July and September of 2012. After five reminders to librarians at Kuwait University and other private universities in Kuwait that were sent to maximize the number of responses, 32 academic librarians responded and answered the questionnaire representing a response rate of 89%. Obtaining emails of working librarians who are willing to answer the questionnaire was a tedious and time-consuming task, a fact that points to the importance of having an active up-to-date system of contacting librarians locally. The questions included criteria derived from the literature surveyed above about trends in library design and services. Out of the 36 academic librarians, 32 responded to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided into six sections, beginning with the collection of demographic data about the participants. The second part sought information about the objectives of building a learning commons from the viewpoint of the participating academic librarians. The third part was about the facilities that should be included. The fourth part sought librarians' opinions of the learning commons' location, design, interiors, and comfort. The fifth part included factors that negatively affect academic library services, and the sixth part included librarians' personal opinions about how to make the new library attractive to users.

Results & Discussion

The study included the perspectives of 32 academic librarians in the State of Kuwait on how to create a new design for the learning commons to make the library as comfortable as possible. Ten male (31%) and 22 female librarians (69%) participated in the study. Table (1) demonstrates the demographic data about the participants. It shows that the majority of

librarians (81%) were in the 30-49 age group. Respondents' work experience ranged from 1-5 years (11 or 34%) to 6-10 years (9 or 28%), which indicates that most of these librarians were relatively young. Only 5 of them or 16% have 16-20 years of experience, 4 or 13% of them have 21-25 years of work experience and 3 or 9% have 11-15 years of work experience.

Table (1)
Demographic Data of the Participants

Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	10	31%
Female	22	69%
Age Group		
20-29 Years	04	13%
30-39 Years	11	34%
40-49 Years	15	47%
50 Plus	02	06%
Work Experience		
1-5 Years	11	34%
6-10 Years	09	28%
11-15 Years	03	09%
16-20 Years	05	16%
21-25 Years	04	13%
Education		
Bachelor's (LIS 02 or 6%)	07	22%
Master's (LIS 22 or 69%)	24	75%
Doctorate (LIS)	01	03%

Regarding participants' educational levels, the majority of them (24 or 75%) have Master's degrees, 22 or 69% of them have degrees in Library and Information Science (LIS). Seven librarians or 22% have Bachelor's degrees, only 2 or 6% of whom are in LIS, and only one librarian has a doctorate degree in LIS.

Objectives of Building Learning Commons in the Academic Library

Academic librarians were asked to rank the most important objectives for building learning commons in the academic library. Table (2) ranks these objectives in a descending order. The great majority of respondent librarians (97%) indicated that the objectives of building library commons were to use research facilities such as databases and Online Public Access Catalog “OPACs”, and to obtain research assistance. The vast majority, 94%,also stressed the need for group study areas and quiet individual study/reading rooms. On the other hand, non-research oriented objectives such as relaxation, socializing, and having refreshments while meeting others were the least identified objectives,at 69% or less.

Table (2)
Objectives of Designing Learning Commons in the Academic Library

Objectives	Number	Percentage
Get research assistance	31	97%
Use online catalog	31	97%
Use databases	31	97%
Quiet individual study & reading	30	94%
Group study and research	30	94%
Use DVDs or videos	29	91%
Use print journals	27	84%
Get help with technology & computer issues	26	81%
Meet with classmates to study & work	25	78%
Relaxation	22	69%
Meet and socialize with others	19	59%
Have refreshments while meeting others	18	56%

Types of Facilities that Should be Included in the Learning Commons

Academic librarians who participated in the study were asked about their perspectives onwhat facilities should be included in the learning commons of the academic library. Table (3) illustrates the facilities ranked in a descending order of their stated importance. As can be seen in Table (3),

there appears to be a pattern of dividing the facilities into three main areas: research activities and related facilities, users' comfort, and users' entertainment. Respondent librarians gave a high priority to research and research-related facilities, as they identified the most important activities of the learning commons as research assistance, OPAC terminals, audiovisuals, presentation labs, and conference halls, with percentages ranging from 97% to 94%. To a lesser extent (91% to 78%) they valued facilities to improve the comfort of users, such as open commons, green areas with comfortable furnishings, and electric outlets for laptops and tablets.

Table (3)
Types of Facilities that should be included in Learning Commons

Facility	Number	Percentage
Online Public Access Catalog OPAC terminals	31	97%
Academic services (research assistance...)	31	97%
Commercial Services (printing, photocopying...)	31	97%
Group study rooms	31	97%
Presentation Labs	31	97%
Audiovisuals	31	97%
Conference halls	30	94%
Electric outlets for laptops/tablets in all areas	29	91%
Open Common Areas	29	91%
Green Areas	28	88%
Comfortable sofas and lounge seating	28	88%
Cultural center	28	88%
Individual study work stations	25	78%
Café	19	59%
Theatre	19	59%
Cinema	13	41%
TV room	12	38%

On the other hand, and as was shown in the previous section, the respondent librarians in the sample, gave low priority to entertainment

facilities for users, such as cafés, theatres, cinema and TV rooms, with percentages ranging from 59% to 38%. This is an indication that the academic librarians in Kuwait still see the library and its newly designed learning commons as a serious place to study, conduct research, and to a lesser extent a place to relax and enjoy the greenery. Accordingly, they gave low priority to entertainment for students in the learning commons. They did not view having a café, theatre, cinema, or a TV room as a necessity, but rather as they most likely see it as a feature that takes the users' attention away from the study and research atmosphere.

Learning Commons' Location, Design, Interior, and Comfort

This section included 15 questions that sought the academic librarians' opinions on the location of the learning commons, its design, its interiors, and its comfort. Table (4) presents the values and importance of Learning Commons design issues in a descending order according to their importance.

Table (4)
Learning Commons' Design Values and Importance

Values	Number	Percentage
Library building is iconic	31	97%
Library location is central	31	97%
Comfortable furniture	31	97%
Attractive library interior	31	97%
Good Lighting	31	97%
Modern library design	30	94%
Multifunctional facilities	30	94%
Clear Direction signs	30	94%
Computer stations in separate areas	30	94%
Electric outlets all around	29	91%
Comfortable lounging all around	27	84%
Very quiet library	25	78%
Library design Impacts its services	21	66%
Computer stations everywhere	09	28%
No computer stations in LC	03	09%

When asked about the location of the learning commons, the great majority of respondents (97%) indicated that it was important for the learning commons and the library to be at the center of all colleges and for the library to be iconic, very remarkable, and a sight not to be missed. The great majority of respondents (31 or 97%) added that the library should have a modern design with multifunctional facilities and clear directional signs. They also said that the interior of the library and its learning commons should be attractive, with good lighting, electrical outlets available throughout the learning commons (91%), and computer stations inside the library and the learning commons (94%), but the location of outlets should be carefully planned to ensure that no terminals that would increase noise level are placed. Respondents stated that the place should have comfortable furniture (97%), relaxing lounges (84%), and a quiet, orderly atmosphere (78%).

On the other hand, respondents did not support the idea of having computer stations everywhere in the library and learning commons. Only nine or 28% supported this idea, while 3 or 9 % supported the idea of having no computer stations in the learning commons.

Factors that Negatively Affect Library Services

Participant librarians were asked to indicate what negatively affects library services. The great majority of them (31 or 97%) ranked noise as having the most negative effect on libraries, followed by excessively open discussion areas and study seating areas between shelves (21 or 66%).

Table (5)
Factors that Negatively Effects Library Services

Factor	Number	Percentage
Noise	31	97%
Open discussion areas	21	66%
Study seating areas between shelves	21	66%
A café in the learning commons	11	35.5%
Water coolers all around	05	16%
Areas for Collaborative work and informal interactions	04	12.5%
Natural light and direct sunlight	01	03%

Table (5) shows the factors that negatively affect library services in descending order of importance. The majority of the respondent librarians (31 or 97%) did not think that having a café in the learning commons is a negative effect, while 11 or 35.5% suggested it could be negative); nor having water coolers all around (5 or 16%); nor common areas to allow collaborative work, discussion, and informal interactions (4 or 12.5%); nor natural light and areas with direct sunlight (one or 3%).

Factors that Make the Library Attractive to Users

The final section of the questionnaire sought to identify the factors that make the library attractive to users from the viewpoints of the academic librarians who participated in the study. Table (6) shows these factors in a descending order of importance.

Table (6)
Factors that make the library attractive to users

Factors	Number	Percentage
High technology	28	88%
Up-to-date resources	27	84%
Publicity and smart advertising	23	72%
Reliability of library staff	21	66%
Involvement in social networking	17	53%
Wireless technology	16	50%
Modern design and good location	13	41%
Interior decorating	11	34%
Comfortable furniture	11	34%
Quiet atmosphere	09	28%
Clear signs and instructions	08	25%
Live plants and greenery	06	19%
Facilities for those with special needs	05	16%
Café and bookstore	03	09%

Table (6) shows that respondent librarians' viewpoints can be

divided into three sections. **The first** section includes those factors that have a percentage of 50 or more, and includes factors related to high technology, such as computers, the Internet, and databases, followed by up-to-date resources, publicity, and smart advertising, then reliability of library staff, followed by wireless connectivity in the library and learning commons. In other words, respondents primarily stressed the importance of information and communication technology in the library. **The second** section had percentages between 41% and 25%, and includes items such as modern design and good location, interior decorating, and good comfortable furniture in a quiet atmosphere, as well as clear signs and instructions. **The third** section received the lowest percentages (19%-0.9%) and includes greenery and live plants, facilities for those with special needs, cafés, and bookstores.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Space utilization in libraries to promote the use of library resources is the theme of many recent research studies conducted by advocates of physical library buildings. The literature surveyed shows that the inclusion of diversified traditionally non-library materials in libraries increases the number of prospective users. Therefore, library buildings should include community spaces, open areas, and home-like areas with attractive furnishings and decorating. Studies have shown that the number of users of new trend libraries has increased tremendously due to the provision of diversified services. Building libraries with multiple services and nontraditional library activities gives users opportunities to break traditional library use routines.

The viewpoints of the academic librarians who participated in this study show a pattern that was clear in most of their ideas. Academic librarians in Kuwait are mostly females, between the ages of 30 to 50 years old. Most of them have been working in libraries for at least 10 years and are holders of Master's degrees. Whether the question of a LC is one of architecture or resources is something that needs to be publicized among them. Kuwaiti librarians need to be educated about it so they are the advocates for its incorporation. The increasing technology diversion and its ramifications on design and access are among the issues that they need to be more aware of. This points to the need for continuing education activities among Kuwaiti academic librarians. They

need to be aware of creatively moving toward the LC concept which means making inviting, likable spaces to students and faculty that they would be physically eager to visit it. This is the guarantee that would transform libraries into LCs instead of becoming deserted spaces.

Designers look at the concept of design, color and space but librarians look more at resources and what makes them marketable. If these two concepts can be brought together then Beagle's notion of "integrative learning" as an interdisciplinary facet of education can begin to emerge in the academic library setting. His IC and LC will continue to exist and be effective. So collaboration of librarians and designers to make libraries more attractive so people do not abandon them will be a continuously pressing concern in the future of libraries.

Most of the librarians in Kuwait did not think that having a café in the learning commons is of negative effect (only 35.5% suggested it could be negative); Whether this means the concept is still being formed or not is a question for future studies to ascertain. Looking at the numbers carefully show that non-research objectives received lower rankings than traditional services; yet the responses were substantial (above 50%) to indicate a positive attitude toward LC concept and its endorsement.

Looking deeply at some of the answers that could be indicative of a developing LC concept, some discrepancies in answers and more hesitation toward adopting the concept exist in this research. When asked about types of facilities that should be included in LC, table (3) shows that 19 respondents or 59% favored café. However in table (4) when asked about factors that affect library services negatively, 11 respondents or 35.5% answered that a café in the learning commons could have a negative effect. Meanwhile, 5 or 16% of them were in favor of water coolers all around and only one respondent or 3% supported natural light and direct sunlight. As table (6) shows factors that make the library attractive to users, only 3 or 9% of respondents thought a café and book store could make the library attractive. This affirms the conclusion of the authors of this paper that this concept is still evolving among academic librarians in Kuwait, in spite of the fact that most of the respondents, as the results show, are highly educated; and as table (1) shows clearly 75% of them hold master degrees.

Bridging the gap between what students and librarians think is

something for future studies to look at and ascertain fully. It is an issue that Kuwaiti academic librarians need to explore. More studies to ascertain if differences in adopting this concept exist between private universities and Kuwait University as a government institution too.

This study indicated that the librarians' viewpoints were divided into three sections. They gave great importance to research and its related activities in the library and learning commons (computers, Internet, databases, resources, reliable staff). They also gave moderate importance to the facilities and comfort of the users, in areas such as good design, location, and modern interiors with comfortable furniture and a quiet atmosphere. On the other hand, they gave little importance to users' entertainment such as cafés, TV rooms, cinemas, and theatres. These results can be attributed to academic Kuwaiti librarians' traditionalist view of the purpose of academic libraries and their learning commons. This is also a reflection of the conservative society in Kuwait. Academic librarians still see the library as a serious place to study and conduct research, and they see entertainment facilities as distractions from the main objectives of learning and the academic library.

It is advised as Kuwait University builds its new envisioned future campus to involve architects and librarians to have their input in developing the concept of LC. It is emphasized that these concepts be referred to in terms of 'collaboration and integration'.

However, effective cooperation should be established between librarians, architects and library communities in planning new library projects in order to highlight design aspects that meet the needs of communities of users. Flexibility in library design is the ultimate way to prevent libraries from becoming extinct due to the widespread use of information technology and affordable access to information on the Internet. This will help users become well acquainted with libraries and ultimately discover the enjoyment of reading, study and research.

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