

An Assessment of Readiness of Sri Lankan University and Special Libraries towards Virtual Library Services

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Abstract

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have made a dramatic impact on the library and information science. Considering the prime task of a conventional library as a distribution centre of knowledge, ICT has made the task so simple that anyone from anywhere can access these knowledge distribution centres. Library Science and Information Science together with Communication Technology have created digital libraries to form a hypothetical virtual library which physically exists nowhere with closed boundaries but accessible anywhere. Practically this hypothetical library exists in the so called World Wide Web commonly known as Internet. Library and Information related services offered to and received from Internet are defined as virtual library services in this research.

The main focus of this research is to assess the Sri Lankan libraries' capabilities as virtual library service centres. It has also created an indicator named Virtual Library Readiness Index (VLRI) which simply means the degree to which a library is ready to participate in this new Information and Communication Technology driven society. $VLRI_{(i)}$ reflects the status of virtual library readiness of individual libraries. The country value, $VLRI_{(c)}$, is the aggregated value of those individual figures. In general VLRI has been measured through a number of sub-indices.

VLRI has been conceptualized based on international ICT indices such as Network Readiness Index, Information Society Index, Digital Opportunity Index and many other indices.

An empirical survey was carried out to measure the VLRI of university and special libraries in Sri Lanka separately. It was able to statistically prove the higher readiness of university libraries, towards virtual library services, than of special libraries. It assisted in identifying the positive correlation of VLRI with researcher defined ICT policy measures too.

VLRI indicates the low readiness of Sri Lankan libraries towards virtual library services when compared to the similar indices of other countries.