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Omani libraries and their role in supporting the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract:

Libraries and information centers are expected to play an important role in helping to achieve the goals of sustainable development, as libraries are the first source of information and knowledge and are the basis for launching the implementation of all future development plans.

Usually, when we talk about libraries we talk about librarians, as all the expected role of libraries is done by them. Their belief in their role in supporting the achievement of development plan goals and their work with the other specialists in various sectors is the basis for the success of countries and societies in their pursuit of sustainable development plans.

This study aimed to find out the awareness of librarians in the Sultanate of Oman of the important role of libraries and information centers in achieving the sustainable development goals, and the role of libraries in the Sultanate of Oman in supporting and achieving the goals of sustainable development 2030.

A survey was sent to 44 librarians in the Sultanate of Oman to identify their level of awareness of the role of libraries in implementing sustainable development plans. The study concluded that there is a relative awareness among librarians in the Sultanate of Oman about sustainable development and its 17 goals. This awareness needs to be strengthened by various parties, and the majority of the sample members believe that libraries are a major contributor to achieving sustainable development goals, while half of the studied sample had never attended specialized workshops to raise awareness of sustainable development and its goals. The majority of the sample is keen to work with available resources to achieve these goals. On the other hand, administrative complexities and limited financial resources are the main obstacles that impeded libraries from achieving sustainable development goals. The participation of libraries in achieving the goals of sustainable development varied from workshops,

lectures and awareness initiatives to providing information sources and encouraging research and scientific publishing.

Keywords: Sustainable Development - Librarians - Sultanate of Oman.

Introduction

IFLA has strived to add the right of access to information as one of the goals of the 16th goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Access to information is an overarching issue that supports all areas of development; Access enables people and governments to make decisions based on information that will improve all aspects of their lives. Access to information is very important to achieve all development plans. Hence, we see that libraries and information centers have a vital role in achieving sustainable development goals.

The contribution of libraries in supporting and implementing the 2030 sustainable development plans varied according to the type of library and its orientation. We found that public libraries have integrated with other bodies (such as health, environmental, sports and cultural bodies) and others to achieve the sustainable development goals associated with them. Academic and school libraries that had made great efforts in supporting digital literacy programs, while national libraries that had made continuous efforts to preserve the material and oral heritage of people.

In its first statement in 2013, titled “Libraries and Development”, IFLA emphasized that libraries provide opportunities for all and that they are the right place for people to develop themselves. The role of libraries and librarians should be recognized and considered as part of development plans, and policymakers should be encouraged to strengthen libraries and give them the status that enables them to play their role in implementing development plans. This emphasis by IFLA is clear evidence of the great importance of librarians in supporting the implementation of development plans. (IFLA,2013)

This study is based on the feedback of 44 librarians from academic and public libraries in the Sultanate of Oman.

Findings and Recommendations

-Librarians' awareness of sustainable development goals:

The study found that there is relative awareness of sustainable development goals among librarians participating in this research, as (27.3%) indicated their awareness of these goals, while (56.8%) of the sample expressed their desire to learn more about the subject, and (15.9%) stated that they do not have enough awareness about the sustainable development goals, and this is what the table below shows:

awareness of sustainable development goals	%
Yes	12 (27.3%)
NO	7 (15.9%)
Need more information	25 (56.8%)

Table (1)

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the sample believe that libraries are a major contributor to achieving the sustainable development goals, while only 22% of the study sample were keen to attend workshops to raise awareness of the sustainable development goals and how to contribute to achieving them. This result shows the need for intensive work to raise librarian

awareness of sustainable development through holding workshops and lectures and facilitating access to them. Twenty one percent (21%) of librarians were keen to carry out activities and initiatives to support the sustainable development goals through their work in the library, while 8% stated that, they did not do any activity about the sustainable development goals.

-Obstacles facing Omani libraries in order to contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals

Administrative, financial and legislative obstacles are among the most difficulties facing libraries in Oman in fulfilling SDGs. It is very clear from the result in the table (2), that such obstacles hold libraries and librarians from being active enough in achieving SDGs.

Obstacles facing Omani libraries achieving SDGs	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Administrative and financial obstacles	39	1	4
Design maker awareness of SDGs	28	4	12
Librarian readiness to work with SDGs	15	20	9
Legislative Obstacles	25	7	12
Not enough libraries in society	20	12	12

Table (2)

What is the role of Omani libraries in supporting the achievement of the 2030 SDGs?

Following some of the suggestions by librarians when they were asked that question:

- Workshops for students.
- Awareness sessions and brochures for the public
- Providing sufficient sources of information related to sustainable development.
- A set of educational courses and workshops to support knowledge sharing between the various libraries.
- Workshops on the use of information technologies.
- Activities and programs for children on SDGs.
- Workshops and lectures on the use of electronic resources.

In conclusion, the study shows that librarians in Oman are very enthusiastic about learning and implementing SDGs. They are urging their libraries to take lead in introducing and implementing the to their users and society.

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