

Cooperation Between Libraries: Challenges and Opportunities in the digital age

- By
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Introduction

- Cooperation: A brief history
- Cooperation definition
- The importance of cooperation
- Cooperation in the present age

Levels of cooperation

- Four levels of cooperation ranging from local level to cooperation at the world wide level.
- three levels of cooperation will be addressed.

1- Cooperation world wide

- Cooperation and coordination in the world wide level may take several images and forms such as the official cooperation among countries under the signed scientific and cultural agreements.
- Also international organization such as UN and IFLA may play a vital role in supporting and developing cooperation between libraries in several areas.

Cooperation challenges in this level.

- There are several challenges that face librarians and library cooperation in the different parts of the world.
- These challenges are:

Challenges

- The exponential growth in human knowledge and the growing diversity in information formats due to the interaction with the new technological and scientific advancement, which require the creation of new ways to meet this continuous growth.
- The educational development in all levels accompanied by accelerated advancements in telecommunication and mass media, require the provision of new curriculums to meet these developments.
- The continuous increase in the cost of library's materials, especially scientific journals.

- The rapid growth and the popularity of Internet has lead to change in the pattern of scholarly communication and publishing.
- The growing request for competent workers, who can deal effectively with information technologies.
- The increased needs and expectations of users accompanied with individual library's inability to meet users demands.

- Culture: it is a real challenge for governments, organizations, and librarians all over the world, because, it is a way of life for individuals and organizations. It has an effective impact on the development of cooperation

Standardization

- Standardization: to use and apply of standard rules is one of cooperation prerequisite. Standardization includes a lot of things such as classification rules, MARC format, subject headings ...etc.

Infrastructure

- Infrastructure provides huge facilities for resource sharing and cooperative collection development .Also the internet growth and the popularity of personal computers facilitated the access to information world wide. But there are still some gabs in the infrastructure, which must be surpassed.

Infrastructure components

- According to Riggs there are four components :
- Hardware
- Software
- Human resources and supporting facilities.
- Data and information.

Opportunities

- In order to face these challenges or at least to minimize them libraries should make use of some available opportunities to enhance cooperation and improve resource sharing world wide. With the use of new technologies, most of these opportunities can be very useful and will help libraries in over passing several challenges.

Opportunities

- Libraries should pay due attention to cooperate in the activities that can help them in facing the challenges, and meet their users needs.
- Resource sharing:
- Cooperative cataloguing:
- On line access to universal information:

- Professional meeting:
- The establishment of local, regional, national and international networks.
- Good planning for library's resource development.
- Take the necessary steps to make use of information technologies, through the provision of computers and telecommunication media.

- Cooperating libraries should use consortia power to obtain better prices and to negotiate better licensing agreement.
- Due attention to continuing education and training staff.
- Develop effective programs to hire qualified staff.

- Libraries should develop and strengthen its functions to keep up with the continuous developments and be centers for life long education.
- Libraries should prove their value and usefulness.

2. Cooperation on the national level.

- Cooperation and coordination may be in smaller form, for example the national level. The case of Arab countries will be discussed here.
- The topic has captured the attention of Arab specialists since long.
- Several conferences and professional meeting have assured the importance of cooperation.
- The 19th AFLI conference 24-26 November,2008. held under the them” Cooperation among Arab Information Institutions in the digital age.

Challenges-National level

- Cooperation on this level faces in addition to the aforementioned ones more challenges.
- Several of these challenges were pointed in a previous study “Library’s career in the Arab world.
- The most important challenges are:

Challenges-N.L


- Shortage of financial resources.
- The absence of an Arabic Information Network to link all the Arab countries and their libraries.
- Most of the Arab countries have not established yet information network to link different libraries.
- Language barrier.
- Unified standards.

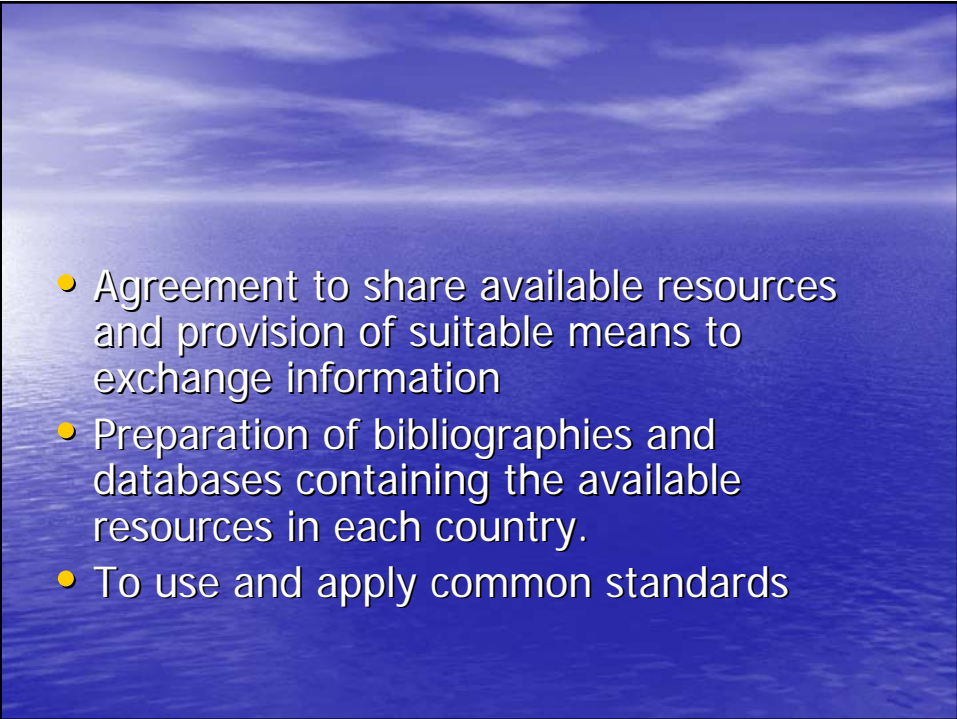
- Democracy.
- Infrastructure.
- Qualified man power.
- Lack of necessary laws and regulations.
- Shortage of basic bibliographic tools.
- Lack of cooperation in the area of technical processing.

- Lack of optimum use of some information sources.
- Weak contribution of National Libraries.
- Lack of information awareness.

Opportunities-N.L.

- There are several opportunities, which can be very useful in improving the actual situation and in facing some of the challenges.
- The Yemeni Information Strategy project has pointed some opportunities.

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- An important step of cooperation in the area of information exchange is to coordinate Arabic Information policies and strategies and to initiate cooperative projects .
 - Take the necessary steps to educate and qualify competent man power to be able to interact with modern technologies.

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- Agreement to share available resources and provision of suitable means to exchange information
 - Preparation of bibliographies and databases containing the available resources in each country.
 - To use and apply common standards

- Develop the appropriate training programs.
- The establishment of local and national networks.
- Some other opportunities are;
- Provision of the suitable mechanism for cooperation among Arabic Information institutions.

- The presentation of successful models
- Development of human resources specialized in information technology.
- Change and development of library science curricula.
- Minimize the language barrier.

- Encourage the use of IT and develop information infrastructure.
- National libraries should play its role and support the cooperative activities.
- The Arab libraries should join the union Arabic catalog.

3. Cooperation on country level

- In this level of cooperation we shall take Yemen as an example.
- Libraries in Yemen face so many challenges and difficulties.
- Cooperation for Yemeni libraries is an absolute necessity.
- Cooperation used to be a way of life, it helped Yemenis to solve so many problems in different areas.

Challenges on country level


- Yemen needs to do a lot of efforts to build the needed information infrastructure.
- Lack of a professional association.
- Scarcity of financial resources allocated.
- Paucity of available collection.
- Unavailability of information networks.

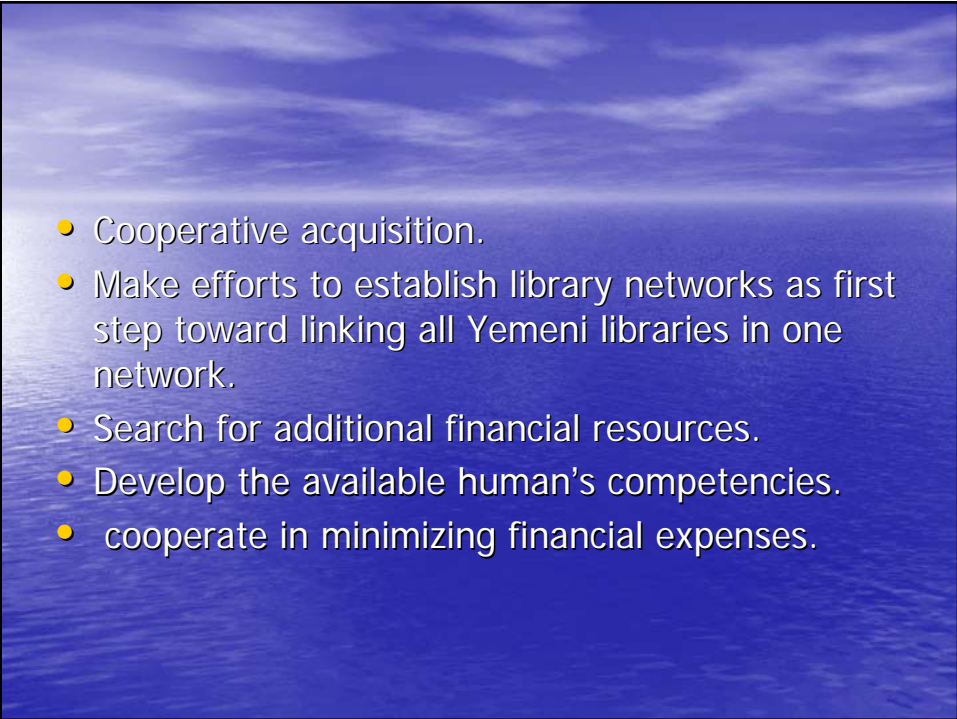
- Unavailability of a central organization in charge of Yemeni libraries.
- Lack of cooperative programs.
- The dearth of information specialists.
- The country's economic situation.

- Lack of scientific administrative methods.
- Lack of information awareness.
- Absences of library legislations and regulations.

Opportunities- country level

- In this level, there are several activities that may become opportunities. It will help in changing the actual situation of Yemeni libraries. It will help in improving library performance and in meeting minimal requirements for users.

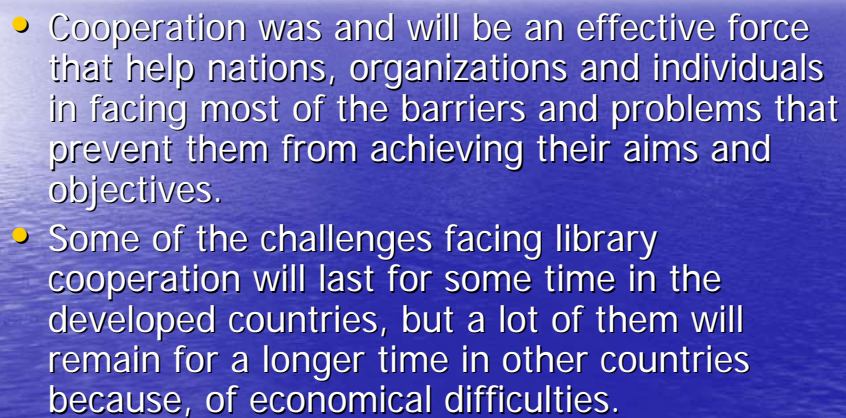
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- Encourage the esprit of cooperation and coordination among Yemeni libraries.
 - Provision of libraries rules and regulations.
 - Increase awareness of the information importance and vital effect the development process.
 - Provision of competent management.

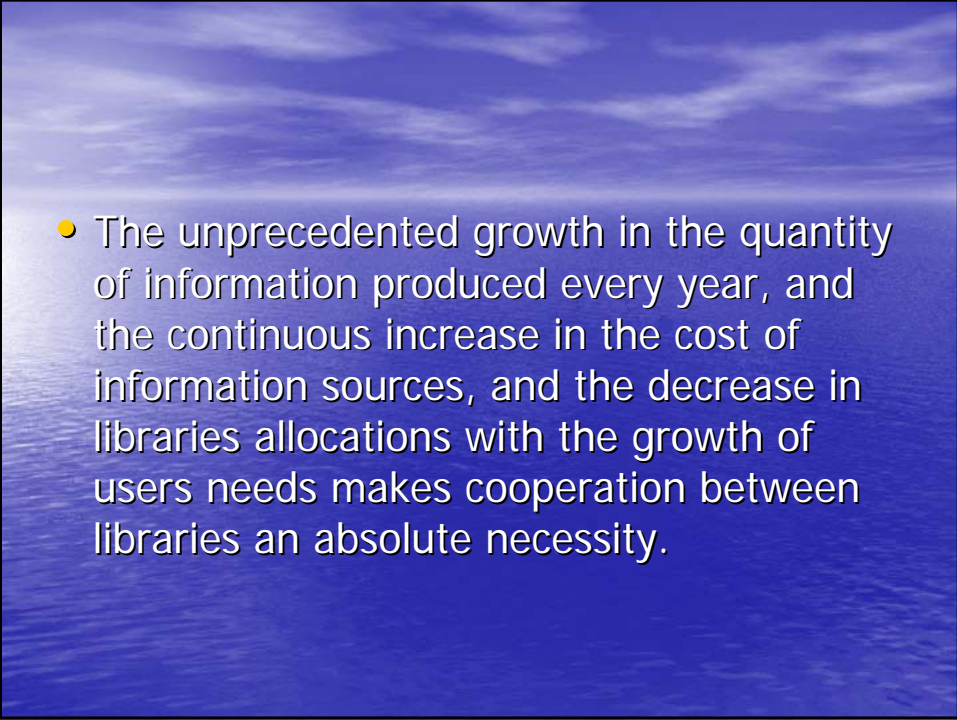
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- Cooperative acquisition.
 - Make efforts to establish library networks as first step toward linking all Yemeni libraries in one network.
 - Search for additional financial resources.
 - Develop the available human's competencies.
 - cooperate in minimizing financial expenses.


- Unifying library's systems in all Yemeni libraries.


Conclusion

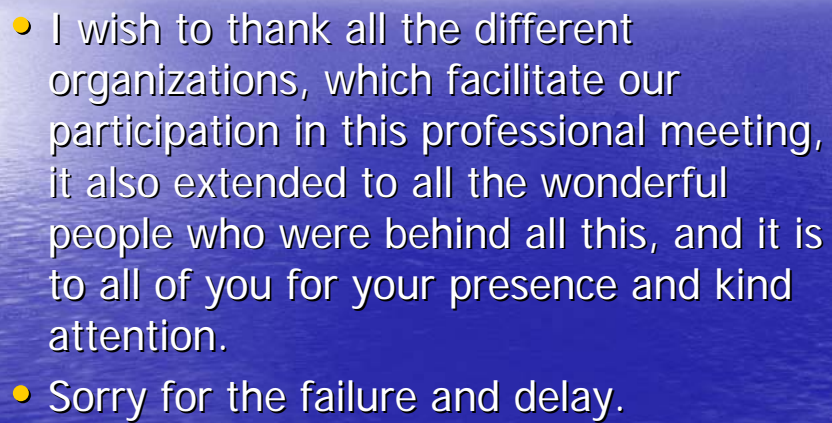
- Finally, we concluded with observations, which we believe to be of extreme importance in developing cooperation in this age of knowledge and digital environment.

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- Cooperation was and will be an effective force that help nations, organizations and individuals in facing most of the barriers and problems that prevent them from achieving their aims and objectives.
 - Some of the challenges facing library cooperation will last for some time in the developed countries, but a lot of them will remain for a longer time in other countries because, of economical difficulties.

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- The unprecedented growth in the quantity of information produced every year, and the continuous increase in the cost of information sources, and the decrease in libraries allocations with the growth of users needs makes cooperation between libraries an absolute necessity.

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- Libraries should benefit from all the facilities provided by new technologies.
 - It is important to promote cooperation culture and publicize it in all levels.
 - There is a big information gap between the developed countries and other countries.

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- Man is an essential component of infrastructure. He plays a vital role in developing library cooperation and in making maximum benefit of the technological advancement.
 - Professional meetings are necessary to strength cooperation and gaining experience and expertise.

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- I wish to thank all the different organizations, which facilitate our participation in this professional meeting, it also extended to all the wonderful people who were behind all this, and it is to all of you for your presence and kind attention.
 - Sorry for the failure and delay.