

# Enhancing Access to Library Electronic Resources through an E-library Portal: The RCSI Bahrain Library Experience

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## Abstract

*The library portal project aimed to improve accessibility and visibility of the Library's online resources, simultaneously enhancing the user experience. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of the e-library portal on the usage of library electronic resources at RCSI Bahrain. Data was collected from library statistical reports. Usage reports from the portal were collected for the year 2018-19 and from individual vendors for the previous years. The study shows that the e-library portal has increased overall usage of library electronic resources. The recommendations for improving the e-portal service include: Upgraded interfaces and compatibility assessments, continuous collaboration between librarians and faculty in selecting and acquiring the most appropriate format of resources to support the curriculum and research needs of the users, well planned and executed marketing strategies for the resources, Workshops/ training in the use of resources and Assessment of the collection to ensure quality and relevance. The development and launch of the portal was not simply a means of enhancing current services and providing a user-friendly platform to access all resources. The portal changed the image of the library from a physical space to a digital companion in student life. Even though the launch of the portal has increased usage of electronic resources, the research needs to be extended to further years to review the access through portal. The library portal has increased the usage but there might be several other underlying factors adding to this, which need to be considered.*

**Keywords:** Academic Library, Electronic Resources, E-Libraries, Library Portal, Library Usage

## 1. Introduction

The impact of technology has immensely contributed to the mode of information delivery of libraries. Library Information Services aim to create unique search interfaces and adopt innovations that will improve user experience. The library portal project aimed to improve accessibility and visibility of the Library's online resources, simultaneously enhancing the user experience. This article looks at

the impact of the Library Portal on the use of e-resources.

## 2. Background/History

RCSI Bahrain library was established in 2005 when the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland- Medical University of Bahrain, a constituent of RCSI Dublin opened its doors in 2004 in the Kingdom of Bahrain. RCSI Bahrain is home to more than 1300 students across the Schools of Medicine, Nursing & Midwifery and Postgraduate Studies & Research. Although RCSI Bahrain draws on the medical legacy



12<sup>th</sup> International CALIBER-2019  
KIIT, Bhubaneswar, Odisha 28-30 November, 2019  
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of RCSI Dublin in the academic arena; the new university building which opened in 2008 was designed as a flagship showcasing the contributions of RCSI Dublin as one of leading healthcare educators in the world. The Library is located on the ground floor of the main building. RCSI Bahrain library working hour is 7:30 AM to 12:00 midnight 7 days a week. The Avicenna Library & Learning Resource Center offers learning, teaching and research support to the students & staff of RCSI Bahrain in terms of resources & flexible learning spaces. The overall print collection is 14,000 items. The main database subscriptions include EBSCO Medline, CINAHL, Academic Search Premier, Psych Info, DynaMed Plus; ProQuest Hospital Research premium, Nursing & Allied Health, PQDT; Cochrane Library; UpToDate. Library subscribes to various E-journals & EBooks from different vendors.

Access to all the electronic resources was initially from the website of the university through EZproxy authentication. The requirement for a single search interface for all the electronic holdings was a longstanding request from patrons. Library invested on its first discovery platform Summon since 2011. It provided a 'one-stop-shop' approach for users, enabling them to search and retrieve subscribed content from within the Library's online collections.

The second discovery platform was introduced in 2013. The Ebsco Discovery (EDS) was part of the library E-portal project. Unique customizations were made to capture the needs of students at different levels. After all customizations and integrations, the e-library portal was launched in September 2018. The library portal is a cloud-based service platform that allows librarians to customize content and workflow according to the needs and free up resources.

Wide range of integrated modules that allow us to control access, manage subscriptions and trials, change content and review usage analytics. Single authentication point, federated search services, mobile versions and Multilanguage interfaces are some of the salient features of the portal.

### **3. Literature Review**

Mane and Pange (2015) in their study highlighted the need for the development of a library portal to meet user's needs. They stressed the need for every library to provide links to collection and services in the library portal.

The librarians at Northern Caribbean University established an e-library designed to enhance access to library resources and support online learning. The e-library has been serving this purpose and has significantly increased the usage of library materials overall. It has been of particular importance to graduate, postgraduate and evening institute students who have little or no time to make use of the physical library facilities. (Knight, 2013)

To improve the usage of the electronic resources, the librarians may have to develop strategies for providing faultless access to the databases as the range and quality of e-resources increase. (Olorunsola, 2011)

Shimada (2007) discussed the Library Portal of the University of Toronto Libraries in Canada. The study includes library services and systems used by the institution to better define and explain the Library Portal. Library Portal functions as a pathway to electronic information and distributor of education through the materials of a library. In addition, the

portal aims to promote the use of digital contents in libraries for easier and faster access.

Blummer (2007) in his study revealed that library users are finding difficulties in obtaining literature and services as library websites are not properly designed. He recommends that a well-designed website with relevant content be required to tackle the increasing importance of the web for research and the increase in subscription cost of electronic resources.

According to Letha (2006) a library portal is highly beneficial to organise, store, and access information. The usage of library e-resources will be limited in the absence of a functional website that facilitates the users to exploit these to the maximum extent. She recommends that web portals are the tools that enhance access to the e-resources by providing visibility of resources. The study explains the portal of Technical Information Resource Centre of Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation and the services provided through this portal. (Letha, 2006)

#### 4. Objectives

This study fulfils the following objectives:

- ❖ To analyse the number of logins to the portal.
- ❖ To examine the databases accessed through the library portal
- ❖ To examine the E-book platforms, clinical guides & e-journal platforms accessed through the library portal
- ❖ To impart some additional training about the electronic resources for betterment of usage.

#### 5. Limitations

The study analysed usage data of two years only, which is not sufficient to conclude that the increase is due to the launch of the portal. Several other factors like information literacy sessions, workshops, module requirements might have influenced the use of resources.

#### 6. Methodology

Quantitative data was collected through the E-portal and analysed. Usage reports from Vendors were collated to prepare the consolidated usage for the years. The data were analysed to see the impact of the portal in the usage of resources.

#### 7. Data Presentation and Analysis

The following data were collected from statistical reports for the academic years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

#### 8. Findings from Library Statistics

Library statistics were examined to ascertain the impact of the E-portal on the use of library online resources. Data were collected from e-portal reports as well as from vendor's usage reports.

##### 8.1 Usage of Databases

**Table 1: Usage data of databases**

Database	Total Search 17/18	Total Search 18/19
<b>EBSCO</b>	158491	271535
<b>ProQuest</b>	22749	64611
<b>Cochrane</b>	645	1210
<b>Web of Knowledge</b>	468	970

It is evident from (table 1) that the use of databases has increased in the current year as compared to

2017/18. The highly searched database as shown in the table is EBSCO with a 71% increase in usage compared to previous year.

**8.2 Usage of e-books:**

**Table 2: Usage data of E-book platforms**

Platform	ActivityType	2017/18	2018/19
Access Medicine	Content Access	1,433	2309
	Search	271	2595
EBook Central	Content Access	412	488
	Search	171	250
Dowson era	Read online	1126	1229
	Download	309	554

The three main e-book platforms that the library subscribes are included in the study. The data (table 2) shows 61% increase in the access of Access Medicine platform, while there is 18% & 9% increase in usage of EBook Central & Dawsonera platforms respectively.

**8.3 E-journals**

**Table 3: Usage data of E-Journals**

Title	Total Search 17/18	Total Search 18/19
BMJ	Not available	1453
Wiley	1714	2619
JAMA	Not available	600

The data for BMJ & JAMA are currently unavailable for the year 17/18. However, with the launch of the portal, the analytics are readily available. (table 3) shows increase in usage of Wiley journals as compared to previous year.

**8.4 Clinical Guides**

**Table 4: Usage data of Clinical Guides**

Guide	Total Usage 17/18	Total Usage 18/19
UpToDate	28561	36415
BMJ Best Practice	Not available	3132
Dynamic plus	Not available	1555

The students starting from their Junior Cycle years heavily use UpToDate. However, other guides are introduced to the students to refer to clinical information while on rotations.

**8.5 Portal Access**

The university’s total student strength is around 1300 with around 120 academic staff members. The total registrations, views and logins are furnished below.

Total Number of Registrations: **1145**

Total Number of Views: **28723**

Total Number of Logins: **17209**

**9. Other factors**

Several other factors influence the use of electronic resources. Few of the important reasons that have influenced the use of library resources in retrieving information are below:

**9.1 IL Sessions**

Information literacy sessions are offered to students from foundation year to senior cycle in the medical school, Year 1 to 4 in the nursing school, the medical commencement program and Masters in Nursing. Sessions are also delivered to the research scholars and faculty upon request. A total of around 150

hours of teaching has been offered every year from the library. This definitely has a positive impact on the use of e-resources subscribed by the library. The findings of a study by Femi and Oyinade (2017), described that librarians are expert in applying criteria to information searches, choosing quality content and teaching users how to assess quality in health care information. Besides, librarians support the efforts of health professionals to be lifelong learners. The sessions that we offer our students have enabled them to access library resources through portal.

### 9.2 Mobile App

Several of our subscriptions including the portal have its mobile app. The ease of access is further enhanced by installing the apps in smart devices.

### 9.3 Module Requirements

Modules that include a research-based project requires students to access specific resources. The module tailored library sessions are made mandatory for those student groups. The recommended resources are introduced to the students in the sessions and access is made through the portal.

## 10. Conclusions and Recommendations

Further research will have to be done as it relates to the needs of the user versus the availability of resources. However, it can be concluded that the launch of the portal has enhanced the use of library resources, as all subscriptions are available in one interface. It has been a positive experience so far for the library and we have to identify ideas and enhancements for ensuring that our systems evolve and go beyond user expectations.

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