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BRAC University: Building a 21st Century Library

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The vision of BRAC University Ayesha Abed Library is to develop a 21st Century world-class Knowledge Resource Centre and provide innovative services and collections to the teaching, learning and research communities. The library employs the latest technologies to improve services and to provide fast and easy access to information. It meets its goals by integrating appropriate technologies with a broadly educated and experienced staff committed to customer service.

The library has implemented a number of projects towards its vision and consequently its staff members have acquired considerable expertise for their own use and help to build capacities for other libraries and to assist other universities in Bangladesh embarking on similar projects (ILS, Digital Repository, Discovery tool etc.). The Govt. of Bangladesh has given top priority on using digital technologies in different sectors especially in education. Therefore the objectives of the projects are fully aligned with the national commitment.

The following- initiatives have been taken by the BRAC University library over the past three years to meet the increasing demands for digital access to an array of contents and services and build a model of a 21st century library.

As a 21st century library, the BRAC University Library emphasises services and access to information, in addition to hosting large collections of items that can be physically shelved. To accomplish this, BRACU has set up a digital library to preserve and communicate the intellectual output created by the scholars of BRAC University.



The main objectives of the project were to collect and preserve various teaching and learning materials and research outputs generated by BRACU academics, and provide e-library services with the e-resources of the library and ensure access to these e-resources for the teachers, students, and researchers of the university.

For this project, open source software DSpace developed by MIT and Hewlett-Packard was chosen. This project commenced in April 2007 and was completed in April 2008 with financial support from INASP, United Kingdom.

BRACU has implemented a complete Integrated Library System (ILS) using KOHA and international standard format MARC 21, Z39.50. KOHA is the world's most widely used full-featured open source ILS that includes modules for circulation, cataloguing, acquisitions, serials, reserves, patron management, networking of libraries and more. It has strengthened the library services. This project commenced in March 2009 and completed in February 2010 and was funded by the ELSEVIER Foundation, UK. BRAC University library was one of the four universities selected by Elsevier from

among 165 applicants worldwide. Library patrons now can perform online renewals, reservations and look at enriched contents from Amazon.com such as book jacket images, reader reviews and selected full chapters. This ILS supports RFID and Mobile SMS Technology.

In today's library environment, patrons encounter multiple interfaces to search, and they often need to learn how to access each system and determine its contents. The Open Source Discovery Tool VuFind has enabled BRAC University library to offer access and discover all of BRACU Resources (catalogue records, digital library items, institutional repository, databases, and e-journals) in one



single search-and-browse system in a robust, and distributed digital environment. VuFind is currently being tested and used by numerous academic libraries including Yale, Stanford, Villanova, York, George Mason, and Princeton University. Some useful features of this discovery tools are: one interface to search multiple "collections", Tagging, RSS feeds, Reviews from Amazon, Book Covers from Google and Amazon, Citation Management (APA and MLA), faceted results, "More like This suggestions", Save to Favorites, Social Networking Tools etc. This project commenced in May 2010 and completed in December 2011 and was funded by INASP.

BRACU Library Learning Resource Centre

Information literacy is a feature of recent innovations in education and a crucial aspect of a modern library. In order to maximize the use of resources and help users gain optimum benefit from information sources and systems BRACU has established a Library Learning Resource Centre (LRC). Library staff teach users to know, understand and evaluate information systems, and to select sources and devise search strategies appropriate to their needs. BRACU library professionals deliver at least 24 lectures each semester for their faculties and students and to date more



than 200 information literacy sessions have been conducted in the past two years.

Training for Library Professionals

In the past three years BRAC University Ayesha Abed Library has conducted several workshops and training programs (KOHA, MARC 21, DSpace, VuFind etc) for increasing capacity building for library professionals working in other university libraries (public and private) in Bangladesh. A total of 250 librarians have been trained in recent years.

(The writer is Senior Deputy Librarian (Head of Library), BRAC University and Project Director, BRAC University Institutional Repository, ILS and Discovery Tool Project)