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The American University in Cairo

The School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

"DO LIBRARIES STILL EXIST?" CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO AN EFFECTIVE ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN EGYPT

A Thesis Submitted to

Public Policy and Administration Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Public Administration

by Radwa Magdy Shehata

(under the supervision of Dr. Ghada Barsoum)

2016

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Thank you

My dear parents,

My friend and soulmate Soha ,

My colleagues Hoda El Ridi & Amal Khalil,

My family, Mohamed, Abdel Aziz, Yosra, Adel, Heba, Eman

My friends, Radwa, Lamia, Sarah, Nour, Aya

My supervisor Dr. Ghada Barsoum.

For your love, support & encouragement

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Abstract

Public libraries are vital public agencies consist of the knowledge empowerment and the information accessibility. This study focuses on the role of public libraries toward serving society in Egypt. It addresses various provided services as well as the actual beneficiaries. The collected data is based on a qualitative study through semi structured interviews with librarians to focus on the existing functionality of public libraries. The main question is how the Egyptian public libraries can serve the society with the concentrate on the challenges they are facing and the possible opportunities for effective utilization. The interview data reflect the strong social mission that libraries have and their role in providing reference and reader services aside from organizing varied activities and supporting the lifelong learning. The study demonstrated the actual challenges which included the librarians' limited training chances as well as their low wages. In addition to the uncooperative polices by the government and the lack of financial resources which required efficient running of the public libraries. On the other hand, the opportunities included the chances to enhance the librarians' skills, raising fund, new policies that encouraged cooperation programs among libraries and other organizations, and the buildings spaces' utilization as well as strengthening the infrastructure.

Introduction

According to the International Federation of Library Associations IFLA (2003),
the main mission of libraries is facilitating the access to information and
providing resources equally to readers and researchers. This mission contributes
to the fundamental values of the constitutional democracy: freedom and equality.
Therefore, the perceived idea of good governance should place libraries in a
unique position as a vital contribution for a democratic regime. Access to a
public library means facilitating free access of information in varied ways for the
whole society members. Therefore the government duty is to safeguard the
quality of the public library system and encourage diversity of information supply
(Baker, 2011, p204).

The IFLAL/ UNISCO guidelines for development (2001) recommend its
existence as intermediate knowledge portal. Public libraries have the advantage of
being influenced by the surrounded social environment. Also they have many
features; one of them is the physical building which can lead to the citizen's
empowerment through informing, consulting, involving, and collaborating via
events. Another attribute is the variance in services which may be offered
simultaneously with other public traditional services such as ICT services and

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training, basic literacy and numeracy provision, children's events and activities, writers' groups/cultural events, and E-government services (Goulding, 2009; Tan, 1999).

The public libraries are targeting raising the public knowledge and self-learning through their information resources and provided services (Hossam El Den, 2005). Then, this study aims at redefining the role of the Egyptian public libraries toward a social mission while discussing their social nexus as well as the actual beneficiaries.

The services provided contribute to the lifelong learning and building of new skills capabilities to help in building the human capabilities for the society members. Those services combine the traditional model of library services which include providing books, journals and research materials through a comfortable reading area as well as other activities which were established based on high social demand. Taking into account the services map to cover the main social groups and set them into three main age ranges (children-youth-adults) besides their expectations.

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The study addresses Egypt's government public funding for libraries, particularly for premises, equipment and ICT. In addition to the Library management which includes services, programs offered and cooperation with partners. This requires addressing the current challenges that face the public libraries and affect the delivery and quality of the services. Accordingly, the researcher investigated the main factors that impact the delivering of the services and the results showed that the government's has the responsibility of cultural activities as well as the actual service delivery. The public libraries' human resource capacity is those responsible for the library collection technical procedures, organizing activities and events as well as supporting all research services. Moving to the physical building which contains all reading and technological facilities such as computer labs, tables, chairs, theater and multimedia devices, taking in consideration the building infrastructure readiness.

On the other hand, there are possible opportunities to support more social inclusion and provide more services. In addition to, there are future chances of changing what was already proposed by the government official and the librarians. The study focuses on the appropriate elements that could lead to actual changes and enhance efficiency of the services according to the available capabilities and facilities.

Chapter I: Literature Review

The literature review includes four main approaches that are covered in the study. The first is concerned with the connections among public libraries and the different society sectors. The second part demonstrates the various services that are provided by the public libraries. The third one focuses on the current challenges and the development barriers. The last section includes the possible opportunities for widening such services' effectiveness and rise the users' expectations from such agencies.

The Role of Libraries in society

How is sharing information in society essential? Baker (2011) mentioned the effectiveness of placing information as a basic commodity provided through libraries. Science information is considered one of the main foundations of any democratic society; the libraries have the responsibility of securing free access to the information resources. The IFLAL/ UNISCO guidelines for development (2001) locates public libraries as the local center of information which is accessible to anybody. Public libraries play an important role in the maintenance

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and development of a democratic society by facilitating the access to a wide and varied range of knowledge to all citizens. Ghosh (2005) considers public libraries as the public access point to the information highway, so they manage the flow of information and put it on the right track to be shared with all the community members.

The UNESCO's Public Library Mnaifesto refers to public libraries as the local gateway to knowledge which provides the appropriate conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individuals and social groups. Also, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) in England sets the public library as a vital entity so they can participate in enhancing the community as well as the civic values according to their role as the 'heart of the community' (Goulding, 2009, p40).

Levien (2011) and IFLA (2003, p2) described the indispensable role of public libraries in the society as a package that combine all of their information, education, and entertainment functions; "they encourage social inclusion; by striving to serve all those in their user communities regardless of age, gender, economic or employment status, literacy or technical skills, cultural or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, and physical or mental abilities". Mainka (2013, p300) who showed the public libraries' active roles in

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terms of economic values where the participation shapes the infrastructure of digital, smart, and creative cities. It also provides spaces that cover different activities which support the business and job market.

The analysis by Danish Agency for Libraries and Media (2010) argue the fact that knowledge, innovation and the society's cohesion are vital factors in future communities' development; considering the lifelong learning as a strategic factor that libraries can contribute through varied ways.   Public libraries are considered as a proof for this as they can connect students of the community through their buildings to meet, learn together, compare notes and join activities, e.g. expositions and author's readings as well as helpful seminars.

In Colombia which is a country suffered for many years from war and also had a wide poverty cluster, the Biblored (Capital Network of Public Libraries) is a strategy which is concerned about innovating the public libraries and strengthen its role in society; their successful strategy for public libraries is to be in the center of the community and develop activities that encourage low-income citizens to have equal opportunity for accessing information and use technologies (Caballero, 2003). On the other hand, Denmark is one of those developed countries which gives the attention to public libraries' vital role through the

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allocation of its national budget; they aim strengthen their functionality in the digital era and accordingly influence the society development. Extended to that Rankin and Brock (2012) who add the spacing value of public libraries referring to the potential effect on the social capital's form as they provide the community with safe meeting locations to gather and discuss issues; in addition to supporting the involvement of individuals and families to connect the local services in general.

In a developing country like Zimbabwe, Chisita (2011) described the public libraries as social hubs that secure varied information materials, learning opportunities, and providing ICT services. At the time Aabo (2005) mentioned that facilitating access ICT and strengthening cities' communication may become one of the central challenges as it will weaken the community's involvement in other social activities and divide the local identity of community.

Accordingly, transformation to fit society is required, the aspiration of Veil and Bishop (2014) brings the idea of using public libraries as a community supporter to back-up the nation during and after disasters. They are considered as secured places with organized volunteers and provide internet access. In addition to their impact on the relations within the society where people from the same areas gather to meet and communicate. A strategy in England initiated by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) 2003 which determines its

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vision for public libraries to be the heart of the community; reasoning that the public libraries are unique places where people can feel free to share ideas and discus what their needs. The government gives the attention to public libraries spaces for holding community activities and events, encouraging voluntary participants, involving citizens in initiating new projects, and allowing the community to participate in the decision making process to put strategies (Goulding, 2009).

It becomes essential to re-evaluate the role of the public libraries and their mission in the society to secure access information and provide varied services. The focus in this century should be concerned about education and training of ICT usage; concentrating on public libraries to act as a window for the society members whom are unable to own technological devices or internet access Aabo ,2005,Baker, 2011). Partap (2014) who emphasizes that public libraries have recently concentrated on the connection rather than having new collection; in other words, focusing on being a user-oriented place rather than just holding books and journals.

Also, being in the spot of the democratic process as the community activity is linked to a democratic inclusive society: Goulding (2009) refers to public libraries as its governmental public entities where the citizens' satisfaction improved through community engagement. Through public libraries, spaces which gather

different society members, the councils can understand the real needs of the local communities in a way that assists the development of standards of living. What has become clear that the concept of traditional services in public libraries has been changed to be more likely a place for entertainment and socializing, where the internet and communication technologies became a key factor that attract current libraries' patrons. The public libraries' users can access internet via computers and navigate social network websites or online gaming sites (3). Also, ((Baker, 2011, p342) assures that the physical library has changed to be a place to communicate and offer new connections and combine all related ICT services besides the traditional collections and shelving-dominated system.

The public libraries role towards the community has become crucial in the twenty-first century. They are serving citizens' fundamental democratic right to access information regardless of the society cluster or level of education. Also, spaces that encourage society inclusion into information world; citizens can gain more knowledge in this entity through the free usage of the ICT services and join interested groups to discuss various community issues. Lastly, a place holds the nature of combining varied generation, cultures, interesting, and social belonging (Aabo, 2005).

<u>Libraries as Service Providers</u>

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The public libraries' function is to combine the society's cohesive forces in the modern library space. A place where the citizens can meet across social, cultural and ethnic groups in the provided meeting rooms to discuss issues and make activities on subjects of interest related to the community. (Danish Agency for Libraries and Media , 2010, p7)

Mainka (2013, p295) summarized the public libraries' role of building the knowledge society to be based on two core services: (1) To support citizens, companies and administrations in their city with digital and reference services, e-resources, as well as user customer services (Chisita, 2011).To provide physical spaces for meetings, learning and working, as well as areas for children and other groups in a building that should be a landmark of the city.

The IFLA (2003, p10) defined the core missions of public libraries' services that are linked to information, literacy, education and culture of communities and listing them as the following:" 1) creating and strengthening reading habits for children from an early age; 2) supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels; 3) providing opportunities for personal creative development; 4) stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people". Additionally, for promoting the awareness of cultural heritage Ghosh (2005) characterized public libraries to be a place for arts,

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scientific achievements and innovations through providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts.

Levien (2011) added that public libraries provide adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups by facilitating holding information and computer literacy skills programs for all age groups, and proposing other related activities if necessary. Therefore, Gould and Gomez (2010) stated that the goal of libraries is "to help user access information and not just information itself, but the processes involved in finding the needed information". Taking into consideration the nature of location, Levien (2011) and IFLA (2003) argued that public libraries should provide services to the society members regardless of whether the materials are printed or electronic materials and to encourage using advanced technologies and communication skills.

Certainly, the librarians are the bridge between services and users. Ghosh (2005) illustrated the process of providing services in public libraries by librarians who are responsible for helping users and how they support "navigate" through information. For instance, they can create pathfinders, offer training sessions on how to use e-mail, search engines, or do word processing, and also provide e-governance services via libraries' computers.

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Public libraries' services are supportive tools for preschool skills, childhood education, and development of literacy skills for adults and youth. All these lead to community cohesiveness and preservation of local identity (Beaudry and others, 2014). Also, it becomes a necessity for population to learn IT so that they can access information. The public library concentrate on that purpose through establishing courses taking into account offering basic skills and sometimes aiming advanced levels of learning (Hapel, 2012)

Moving to the IFLA (2013) assertion on the public libraries' active support toward literacy campaign as the key element for education and knowledge as well as using libraries facilities. The available resources in public libraries can support the lifelong education of societies based on independent studies and collections of textbooks, references, visual media, digital repositories, or government publications.

Moreover, the public libraries' role can integrate the school curriculum and tool up learning how to do research (Abolaji, 2009). IFLA (2013) refers to personal development and the impact on developing communities through facilitating opportunities of learning basic life skills, hold health awareness programs (AIDS-HIV-..Etc.), and organize classes that may contribute to eradicating illiteracy. Also, raising parents' awareness levels which is important so that they can deal with their

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kids and know how to improve their skills. Also, parents' literacy is a crucial point, so that they are able to help their kids in their school homework (Chisita, 2011).

Moreover, the public libraries' services have an impact on children as it aids in character forming their life vision through developing language and raising knowledge. According to IFLA, public libraries should focus on organizing creative programs that bring joy to kids, not only kids, also find activities to be shared between kids and their parents. The goal is to empower kids' personalities and expand their knowledge. Simply, the story telling time can be a tool for the oral communication for the history and traditions as well as help avoiding technology dominance (Chisita, 2011). Therefore it is considered a value channel with which we can teach our children easily form their cultural identity through successful stories. Furthermore, it is a place where children have their own world of activities and entertainments through fairytales, theater shows, books, art crafts, drawing, and scientific clubs (Hapel, 2012).

Moving on to the contribution of public libraries which have an impact on enhancing workface development as they provide essential training courses (computers-job search- career development-writing resume), public access to new technologies, and collaboration with community agencies as well as education institutions. It could be a place to help job-seekers with adequate trainings and career opportunities. Previous elements put public libraries as an effective entity

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that can enhance the local workforce (ULC, 2007). The survey which has been established by The International Adult Literacy showed how the literacy influence the labor level in terms of quality and widening the job market calibers.

Recently, the ICT in the libraries modified the traditional face of libraries; they became closer to a social networking center that attracts young users to visit libraries not only for the reading purpose but also to use technologies. It could be the second home for the young people where they can find coffee shops and gaming devices area (Abolaji , 2009, Ghosh, 2005). However, the rural area's public library mainly serves the agriculture literature with the cooperation with the national stakeholders and other partners which support providing the required materials for the village citizens. The collection would assist the villagers and respond to the inquiries regarding the information needed for their business (Gould and Gomez, 2010).

<u>Challenges Facing Libraries</u>

Public Libraries are facing many challenges that affect its functionality and delivering effectiveness, Gould (2010) and Ghosh (2005)   mentioned that inefficient polices related to information is the main obstacle that affects the libraries' performance. They recommend reviewing the policies' successes and failures in serving the local needs and allocated funds required for the knowledge developmental projects.

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As IFLA (2003) determined how poor resource allocation negatively affects the improvement and collection development in public libraries. Also, the results of the survey conducted by Gould, and Gomez (2010, p 168) showed a double challenge to libraries in developing countries: "how they can include non-traditional library roles and how they can embrace new opportunities that ICT use offers". As the ICT became an essential element in the public libraries, The Danish Agency for Libraries and Media Report (2010) stressed the inevitability of strengthening the ICT to cope with the new media era which changes the user needs and the societal demands of the public libraries. Therefore, the main challenge is how the public libraries will develop both the new and the traditional services in order to satisfy the users.

Formulation policy of the public libraries should be included in the national vision to define clear objectives, priorities and services that fit the local community needs IFLA (2003, p10). The public library has to be organized effectively and put professional standards for operation to be maintained under a national strategy. Hence, it is not about working individually as it should be have a national vision that serves the locals' needs via public libraries' services. Accordingly, it is essential to set strategies and policies that lead to fund raising options as well as coping with the global and the local changes.

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The problem is that public libraries are still stuck in the context of old traditional services; one of the main challenges that users are not aware of is the transformation that combine both traditional and non-traditional services to widen the benefits of ICT (Gould and Gomez, 2010). Another challenge is that results of any services are in a long term and hard to measure or to put standards for cost versus services (Partap, 2014).

No doubt that the libraries' future characteristic would change to be net based serving entities and this would result in the the closure of many libraries branches (Hapel, 2012). The families have no time to visit libraries as well as youth users whom recently prefer the digital world instead of visiting libraries (Rankin and Brock, 2012). In case of visiting public libraries, the user's perception for the library is not just to accessing information; the patrons want human support so that they could find the information they actually need. Not all the staff members have the adequate level of awareness regarding using ICT to be able to serve users and provide them with the required training courses (Gould and Gomez, 2010) .

The fact that Hapel (2012) stated that many people may get attracted to satisfy their needs of information via internet and database. The rapid development in technologies somehow affects the presence of physical buildings and can gradually result in their disappearance. As Gould and Gomez (2010) mentioned that the traditional buildings of public libraries that contain printed

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materials would only be visited by limited audience. Therefore, if the public libraries did not provide ICT, how the poor segment of the population can reach information. In addition, the weak internet bandwidth is considered a barrier to provide ICT services efficiently (Beaudry and others, 2014).

Moreover, the fund of those public venues is a main barrier that affects their success; the governments do not prioritize the allocation of money for public libraries despite the vital role they play. Without the support of government, the public libraries could not afford sustaining as efficient public serving entities. At the time Goulding (2009) discussed the public libraries challenge to convince the local authority and external organization that they can be an effective partner for delivering comprehensive issues.

Opportunities for Libraries

To face the challenges and reach more effectiveness, public libraries' administration should find possible solutions related to concern the sustainability and future development. The public library is considered one of the central public venues for everybody. For that purpose Gould and Gomez (2010) emphasized the importance of providing an adequate environment that is related to socio-cultural factors, political will, regulatory framework, as well as popular support. Ghosh

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(2005) illustrated how the public library's management can develop strong and sustainable working relationships to support sustainability. The cooperation with information centers, special and academic libraries in the region is required for promoting and modernizing the public libraries' services in the country.

Also, there are some concerns regarding the lack of the required funds for the development and sustainability of public libraries. The Danish Agency for Libraries and Media committee came up with recommendations that they should work on it systematically to establish binding partnerships. The partnerships programs create a multitude of offers across the public sector, business life and civic society cooperated programs. Example for such programs in the project of digitizing the Austrian National Library collection by Google company; A public-private partnership which Google was the main funding sponsor in addition to the technical experience in digitizing books. (Kaiser, 2012)

The administration of public libraries also has the chance to cope with the drawback of printed versus electronic and digitized materials by focusing on the future design of physical buildings. To utilize spaces, they have to start establishing technology-infused study rooms and project-development spaces as laboratories for learning, in addition to providing teaching spaces for other institutions. (Freeman, 2005, p5)

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Also, Levien (2011) mentioned the role of librarian in helping users; the library's staff are the professionals who are available to provide unbiased services for individuals with no charge .They have no commercial incentives or political preferences affecting their advices. They are experts in navigating the library's collections, organizing seminars, convening events, and organizing exhibits. Also, they try to select the adequate technologies to meet the users' needs and offer training for using them. Those professionals are the key that leads the library's driving force for change.

Regarding to merging governmental services via public libraries, in the United States, the technology access survey 2011-2012 showed that almost 96.6% of the public libraries provide assistance to patrons applying for or accessing e-government services. Over 70% of the staff help patrons in completing the government's forms, and nearly 31% of public libraries become partners with government agencies and/or nonprofit organizations to provide e-government services. Moreover, 27% of the dial-up users who are primarily located in the rural areas and claim that they do not have any other access to the broadband internet service in their area and depend on using public libraries' ICT. (Veil and Bishop, 2014, p722). Hence, the previous results can prove the fact that ICT via

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public libraries may give the privilege of acting as an intermediary hub to benefit the community as service arm for the government. (Ghosh, 2005)

Certainly, public libraries' mission is wide and requires a lot of financial resources to cover all citizen perceptions (Chisita, 2011). The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) option can guarantee surviving public libraries at the time they lack financials resources and cost reduction which may affect the services' level of quality. Initiating PPP policy would reduce the burden of national spending for public libraries and allow flexibility to run through other adequate offers (Hapel, 2012). Therefore, the administration can choose the cooperation programs through PPP to be able to afford establishing successful programs.

The public library is considered as an axial center that contains many activities which attract citizens as well as institution partners. Therefore, the cooperation programs can generate cohesive and well –functioning public services through allowing new innovative style of public libraries (Hapel, 2012).

The strong and prosperous communities present a successful partnership program among libraries and local authorities through hosting one-stop shops for counselling information and advice. A co-location partnership makes libraries as a housing offices representing local authority body to help in responding to people's requests. This showed that the government can establish such cooperation to encourage participation of groups and individuals who are hard to reach but they

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visit public libraries (Goulding, 2009). Berryman's (2004) report discussed the issue of public libraries as an e-government service provider. It showed that The National Office of the Information Economy in Australia utilized the public libraries' location and facilities to be a public mediator that provide e-government services with the assistance of the librarians. Whereas New South Wales Government went beyond e-government services; to increase the efficiency of public libraries and raise the concept of e-democracy, they focus on strengthening the IT infrastructure to encourage e-commerce activities to support the economic development process and force geographic and social isolation.

The adaptions in libraries' role change the concept of public libraries. They share and facilitate other agencies' jobs which also hold shared services with other organizations aiming at the same goals. Such coordination can combine public libraries and other public serving entities in a way that boosts delivering services (Gould and Gomez, 2010). In India, the Chandigarh local authority experience showed that they co-operate with public libraries to design outreach seminars, interaction sessions, and exhibitions for the community members. The local authority wants the citizens to discuss raised public issues in a safe and comfortable place as well as to give their feedback on the provided public services (Partap, 2014).

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While funds sources are mainly from the government, the charitable societies, donations, and membership charges (Ghosh, 2005), the public libraries should look for strategies that attract donors, private sector, and users to assist libraries' sustainability and utilize their existence. The marketing could cover what libraries provide and what users need (Tella, 2012). Also, the ICT became an essential tool for many users to access information. Therefore, strengthening the ICT infrastructure could be a key factor that would change the people's view to public libraries' traditional physical buildings (Gould and Gomez, 2010).

Utilizing public libraries' facilities and spaces are proven in the following actual experiences. The study of Veil and Bishop (2014) discussed the U.S Federal Emergency Management Agency's cooperation with the public libraries. The public libraries are already equipped with devices that can assist local authorities during disasters. They benefit from them as a central location that guarantees stable communication land-lines and power generators. Also, Zimbabwe's experience with eradication illiteracy which highlighted the vital role of public libraries' cooperation program with the government. They were responsible for hosting and organizing eradication illiteracy classes (Chisita, 2011).

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Background

Public libraries in developed countries have a vital role in the ideational radiance. Their active participation supports the development of local communities (Baker and Evans, 2011). Egypt as a developing country has many public libraries distributed nationwide in the twenty seven governorates. This study addresses the role of the Egyptian public libraries in serving the society by focusing on the types of provided services, challenges, and opportunities. The target is strengthening and flourishing such public agencies' roles which can effectively help in the community's cultural development strategy via facilitating access to information resources and provide lifelong learning channels through training, community meeting room, job fairs, etc.

The number of public libraries in Egypt is approximately 1161 libraries as estimated in 2005 (Hossam El Den, 2005). Those public libraries follow Ministry of Culture, local authorities, and NGOs. One of those NGOs is The Egypt's Society for Culture and Development Organization; it is a non-profit organization that aims providing varied civic activities and established sixteen public libraries. The study covered six public libraries' branches, such as Misr Public Libraries (Previously: Moubrark Public Libraries), which is under the supervision of the

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Minstery of Culture. Also, Maadi Public Library which follows the NGO Egypt's Society for Culture and Development Organization. The focus is on Cairo governorate which consists of a total of 144 public libraries with the percentage of 12.4% of total public libraries in Egypt (Hossam El Den, 2005).

The public libraries in Egypt are divided into two groups; the first group is public libraries which consist of sub-sectors and are under the supervision of the Ministry of culture, which is responsible for monitoring and operating, and their main financial resource is from the national income. Those public libraries are established by the state, local authorities and other countries which donate to those libraries. The second group is for those public libraries which are established by NGOs and are under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity and their fund depends on donations from individuals and companies.

Although there is no clear policy for managing public libraries in Egypt, they are under the supervision of Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Solidarity and follow the national public agencies' policies and regulations in managing daily work procedures and public funding item. However, some of those policies are not supportive enough to cope with the nature of managing public libraries.

The Egyptian constitution lists an item for managing the flow of information and the citizens have the right to access all national information, data and documents, whereas the government has the responsibility to monitor its accessibility and preservation in the Egyptian National Archive.

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Chapter II: Methodology

This study was conducted using qualitative analysis through interviews with librarians in public libraries to investigate the actual planning and practicing process. The methodology is based on the analysis of the collected data through semi-structured interviews. The sample is purposeful to concentrate on major libraries in Cairo which are known to be energetic and effective in the delivery of services. Selecting those public libraries were based on having similar services and users; such as Misr Public Libraries and Maadi Public Library. The libraries are divided into two levels

- Top tier; urban areas (Maadi – Heliopolis - Dokki)
- Lower tier; slum areas (Shobra AL Khema – Zawya Al Hamra).

The researcher conducted seven interviews with six senior librarians who are considered professional in their work, and one government official is working in the Egyptian Ministry of Culture who clarified the governmental vision and policy towards public libraries. The interviews were conducted at work and the

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duration average for each is 30-45 minutes, in addition collecting further data from informal discussions with the researcher's colleagues.

The conducted interviews provided a recent picture of public libraries and how they cope with the changing roles of the serving society combining traditional and non-traditional services. To examine such experience, the following example of interview questions have been chosen which were selected to cover all the topic perspectives and taking into account the simplicity to encourage interviewees to answer them.

Key interview questions:

- What kinds of technological devices are used in the library?
- What are the main services that are provided by the library?
- From your point of view, what are the main challenges that face rolling public libraries in Egypt?
- What is your vision for the future services and its effectiveness towards users?
- Are there any strategic plans or proposed alternatives that scope any budget deficit?

Research questions

The main research question of this study pertains to what are the challenges and opportunities of more effective use of public libraries in Egypt?

The study's specific research questions are as follows:

1. What kinds of services are provided by the Egyptian public libraries?
2. How can public libraries in Egypt further serve their communities?
3. What are the main challenges that libraries face?
4. How do these challenges affect the functionality of the public libraries in Egypt?
5. What are the future opportunities for libraries services?

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Conceptual Framework

The public library is considered as the local portal that is mainly concerned for knowledge acquisition in the society; it plays a vital role in lifelong learning and supports decision making for persons and social groups through offering varied information resources. The establishment of public libraries is through local authorities, the government, or community organization to have the role of raising knowledge via information resources and services. The public library mainly focuses on serving the public to satisfy their knowledgeable needs. It is the entity which all society members can access the information, join activities, and use facilities regardless of the vein, gender, religion, language, disability, and educational background (IFLA, 2013).

a. Technological Changes

Gould and Gomez (2010) mentioned that the governments in many developing countries ignore the role of public libraries' impact on ICT literacy and how they made efforts to facilitate using and learning technologies especially the poor and low budget cluster. Also the currently major users prefer dealing with the technological environment, so the traditional building of public libraries which contains printed materials would only be visited by limited audience. Accordingly,

the rapid development in technologies somehow could affect the presence of the physical buildings and can gradually vanish them. The facts that people are currently get attracted to satisfy their needs of information via internet and database. Consequently, the library's future characteristics would change to net based services and result in the closure of many libraries branches (Hapel, 2012).

The new policies have to focus on a long vision of the transformation from traditional classic library services to new digital and online based services (Baker, 2011, p345). However, if the public libraries went digital they still have some challenging issues that would face their administration. The electronic materials are very expensive and require strong financial resources to be able to purchase e-books and subscribe to online journals and databases. In addition to the need for keeping up with the new technological changes for computer and equipment to cope with the new developmental changes (Mainka and others, 2013; ULC, 2007).

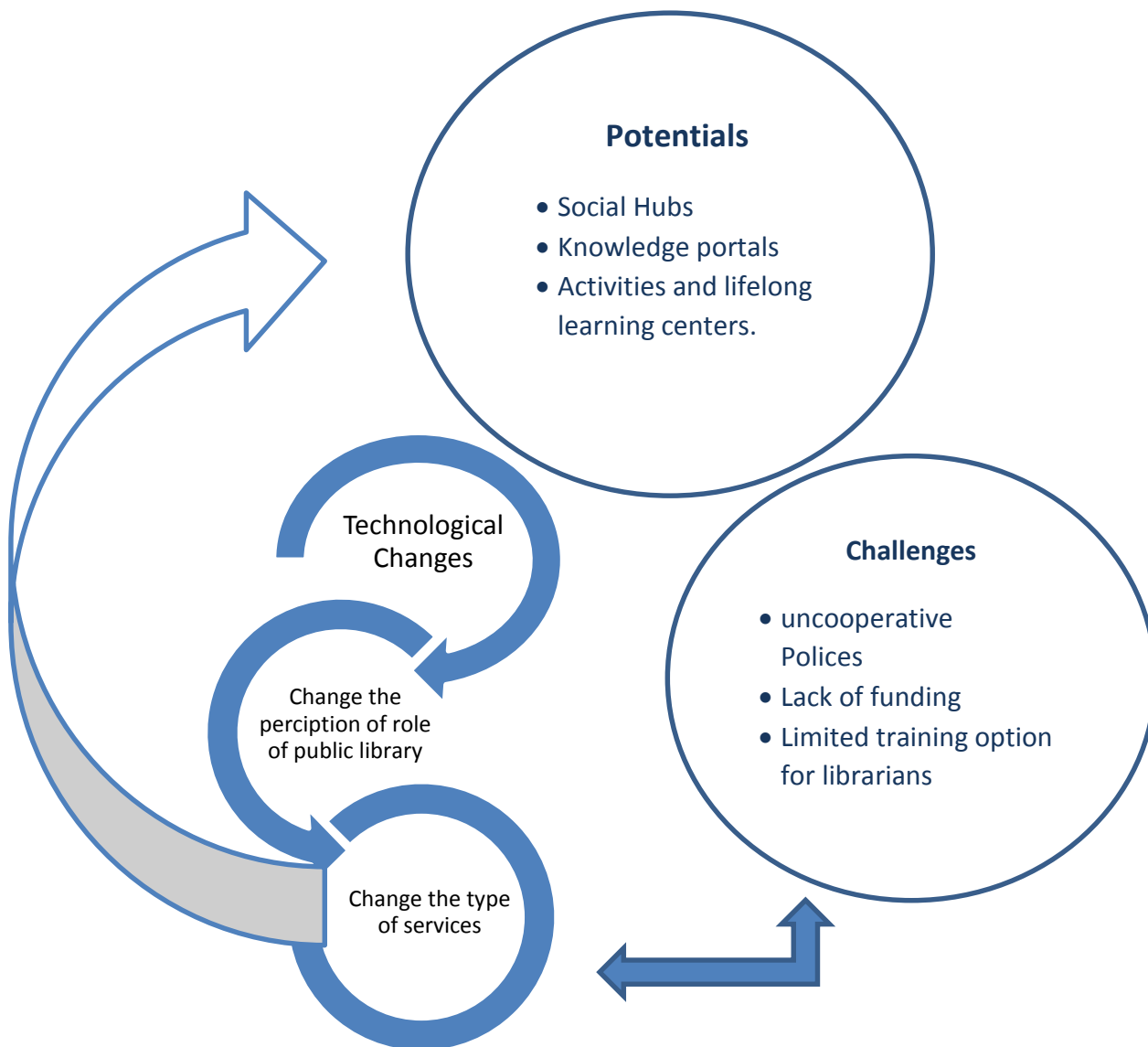Thus, the policy makers should take into consideration the actual usage of public libraries versus the use of cybercafés and cultural centers. They have to measure the actual satisfactory level of citizens from public libraries (Gould and Gomez, 2010). The study could assist in investigating what users expect from public libraries and to focus on what is required to utilize public libraries efficiently.

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b. <u>The role of government</u>

The government role for developing the public venue is to secure the allocated funding and initiate required policies (Aabo, 2005). In the study, sterile policies and regulations have a negative impact on the public libraries' development as they cannot cope with the changes that happen globally in the librarianship field. Accordingly, re-evaluating actual policies and creating new ones can support the management of public libraries to set a stable strategy that could sustain and improve those public cultural portals.

c. <u>Lack of financial resources</u>

The fund of those public venues is a main barrier that affects their success; the governments do not prioritize the allocation of money for public libraries although the vital role they play. Without the support of government the public libraries could not afford sustaining as efficient public serving venues (Gould and Gomez, 2010). The budget shortage is one of the main reasons that lead to closing libraries branches at the time in which the local political and democratic rules marginalizes them from the public funding (Hapel, 2012; Rankin, 2012).

(Figure 1): challenges and potentials that affect the provided services

As shown in figure 1, the effect of technological changes that happen in the society improves the citizens' perception toward the role of the public libraries. Thus, the actual functionality of the public libraries in Egypt focuses on being a social hub for gathering and joining activities as well as supporting lifelong learning through different courses and education programs. On the other hand, there are some challenges that affect the quality of the provided services which include uncooperative policies that manage the activities among public libraries, further public agencies in Egypt, the lack of funding which is needed for building premises and having equipment and ICT, in addition to the limited training opportunities that require developing the librarians' skills in order to reflect the quality of delivered services.

Chapter III: Social services via public libraries services

The public libraries are not just the place for finding books, but also the place where you can find people who are ready to help users. The statement said by a librarian *"The library can put you on the right track"* expresses the library's ability to fill the information gap among the poor and rich through securing and facilitates accessing the database for all society sectors as it is considered the local gateway to national and global knowledge (Partap, 2014).

The Public library is parallel to the government's mission which targets the public serving of society. It is considered as an intermediary place for processing services and satisfy citizens' demands according to the allocated resources. As a central meeting point, the public library is for all community members with different age levels. The staff efforts are to meet the users' requirements and to adopt them with the library location that would serve the community effectively (IFLA, 2013).As a librarian mentioned *"We should study the surrounded society and know what they really need"* and she gave a real example for how a library can serve those illiterates in public libraries located in Ain Al Sera:

> *"This area as it is centered in a place for cemeteries and cars craftsmen so you are talking about an extreme poor society and we investigate how we can make their benefit from the library and we found that illiteracy programs (computer, reading and writing) are the best fit"* (Librarian)

The statement demonstrated the multifunctional role of public library and the involvement in the society with a non-traditional role and the ability to "provide physical spaces for meeting, learning and working" (Mainka, 2013, p295). Also, merging the ICT with traditional knowledge resources can support today's social and educational patterns of learning (Freeman, 2005). The research team in Egypt reported that technology services became the major source of attraction to these venues (Gould, and Gomez, 2010) and that corresponds to the observation of a librarian:

"There are some people who come now to the library just to exploit the availability of WiFi internet service where they can use their laptops, play and work because the internet is free" (Librarian)

According to previous observation, it is noticed that the users head to the public library's physical building for using the free internet and not its materials. They take the advantage of a technological service that may not be available in their homes and is available in a nearby public library.

The physical library has changed to be a place to communicate and offer new connections and combine all related ICT services besides the traditional collections and shelving-dominated system (Baker, 2011, p342).One librarian referred that public libraries provide services to society's embers regardless of the range of age and facilitate implementing new services according to the users' requirements.

"It not just a place for holding books but also a place for helping library visitors"
"the focus on book never be the same as to activities" (Librarian)

The public library's spaces encourages the society inclusion into information world; citizens can gain more knowledge in this entity through using the free of ICT services and joining activities and events (Aabo, 2005). One librarian explained how cooperation and communication can utilize the library's space and its ICT facilities for serving the surrounding entities.

"We started to think out of the box, the surrounding *schools suffer from poor infrastructure, so we encouraged them for hosting their events in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and we have successfully organized a competition for the talented students"* (Librarian)

The student were certainly attracted to the event where they enjoying their time and also were encouraged to gain information and accordingly this motivated them to visit the library again. They said that they wish to join more events in the library as they feel attached to the place.

One core public library mission is to fit the services and users together according to people's ranges of age as well as covering not only the cultural prospective, but also the ethical and behavioral manners as their aim is to help the whole to benefit from such services (IFLA, 2013).

"*We offer activities and courses held by the public library targeting the development of the surrounded society"* (Librarian)

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According to the statement mentioned by the librarian, she explained how her library compiled consultative demands for the targeted customers; a mother may ask the professional librarian for activities that can help her son. One mother feels that her son is hyper and she cannot control his behavior so she asks us to direct her to the appropriate activity that may help in the amendment of her kid's behavior. This corresponds with a Danish's survey which held in 2009 and the results came with the necessity of face-to-face guidance through professional librarians who can facilitate finding information and support citizens' personal development (Baker, 2011).

While Public libraries should have a neutral image towards political and religion (Partap, 2014); however the reality appeared to be somehow contradictory; four of the interviewed librarians have the same comment regarding how it is unacceptable to discuss religious or political issues through established seminars in public libraries.

"I have tried to contact previous member of the parliament to present his program in our library and the administration refused as this is considered to be a political aspect and we should not talk about it" (Librarian)

Whereas the public libraries devoted their efforts to maintain a democratic society by facilitating gaining knowledge (IFLA, 2013), the librarians feel that services are restricted to a limit as they cannot reach specific topics in some established activates.

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Also, the public libraries have a potential effect on the formation of social capital. They provide the community with safe meeting spaces for gathering and discussing certain topics; supporting the involvement of individuals and families to connect local services in general (Rankin and Brock, 2012). One of the libraries provided an example of such formation through a volunteering group, the "library friends" who started to be library users and then become active participants when we do not have enough staff needed to organize specific events or workshops. Library friends usually meet in the library to discuss holding events in the orphans' day or mother's day and to take the responsibility of organizing and collecting donations to bring presents.

"*We have noticed that the library became a social center for youth and social services behind the cultivating purpose* "(Librarian)

The user became interested in other activities rather than reading only, they want a place to enjoy and take advantage of benefitting from its services and facilities. The librarians claimed that public libraries now mainly provide basic knowledge resources (journals- books- CD- Educational materials) besides activities such as workshops, courses, and events.

The public library is an entity for all society members who can enter and use its resources regardless of the standards of living or and educational levels (IFLA, 2013). One librarian said that the public libraries' role now is encouraging

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reading and cultural activities in general at the time we are facing absence of

entities which do not care about this essential aspect of society formation:

"It is a place to offer services regardless of ages cluster (children-youth-adult)
and from a while to another finding what best fits our users and how to develop
the services as we are trying to provide a comprehensive serving model"
(Librarian)

The librarians demonstrate that the public library's actual bind is through

the provided services; it is about creating social activities besides the traditional

role, and the main aim is to satisfy different people's needs of knowledge.

Services provided and beneficiaries

Today's public libraries offer a wide range of services to serve the local

community aiming to meet their requirements; the public library might be a coffee

shop for reading newsletters, a playroom and story time for children, a meeting

room for youth, or a theater for plays and events (ALA, 2011).

The public libraries of the study usually open the whole week except for a day

off. They provide the traditional services, such as reading areas, borrowing

materials, copying, internet, and scientific research services. In addition to other

varied activities such as computer courses, language courses, and accredited

certificates in computer and languages, Arabic calligraphy workshops, arts

classes, UC MAS (Universal Concept of Mental Arithmetic System) courses,

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discussion panels for developing behavioral skills, literacy classes and space exhibition.

Services for children

The services mostly go to children as they are eager to visit the library and participate in various activities especially in their vacations. One librarian described that *"the activities side is amazing"*, explaining how they attract the users from the children who interested in activities. Obviously, the library provides the story time, as an example, in an innovative way of providing activities, so they can merge the book with activity as one librarian explained such merging:

"We link the language learning, unlike the traditional model in schools, and with a foreign concept called (fun with language) while you are learning inside the library, we connect attendee with related books" (Librarian)

Therefore, the service combines between joy and gaining knowledge, not like the traditional way of narrating story. The librarian targets this concept to attract children to visit the library and to love reading.

Additionally, the public libraries offer cheaper services in comparison with other private places for preschool skills and childhood education (Beaudry and others, 2014, Rankin, 2012). Also, it could be an adequate space where it is safe and quiet for doing their homework (Hapel, 2012).A librarian described how

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public libraries can provide the time and space for kids to help them in doing their

homework, providing them with assistance, and raising their general knowledge

through activities.

"our thinking how to strengthen our kids in math and calculation on an average price with UCMAS; we have successfully established these courses in levels, taking into account the pricing level of the course as compared to the surrounding standards of living" (Librarian)

As explained the public library supports the formation of our children is

characters through developing language and knowledge (Rankin and Brock,

2012).Its activity can boost the competence spirit into children's mindset.

Actually, the role of public libraries goes beyond organizing summer activities or

workshops as required. They encourage kids to participate in champions

nationwide like (Chess Championships, Little Inventor Club, and Arab Scientists).

One librarian described such case:

"With the cooperation of the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, the center of exploring sciences, and some private companies, they supported organizing a workshop to create a Robot and (AL-Baironi) which focused on simplifying the scientific notion for children" (Librarian)

So it is considered a value channel as we can teach our children easily

their cultural identity through successful stories. Also, the kids can join an activity

and the outcome is a new product; for instance, one child can learn how to create

a warning device. In this case, they added to the concept of fairytales and novels

the joy of the science world. Therefore, the public library is a place where

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children have their own world of activities and entertainments through fairytales, theater shows, books, art crafts, drawing, as well as scientific club (Hapel, 2012).

Certainly, the registration fee for such activities is an attractive feature for audience who are aiming public libraries' services. The varied standards of living for the Egyptian families can afford the cost of registration as the library considers such activities' expenses to be in an average level. They try to cover all the users' requirements and to response to their requests aiming to satisfy them according to the available resources.

"Our services are usually cheaper than outside, for example, the drawing workshop cannot be more than 100 LE whereas the Art Café (Private entity) costs 580 LE and in "Sakiet El-Sawy" it costs 120 LE" (Librarian)

Consequently, the library provides the private entities' services in the same place where kids can enjoy other activities such as reading, drawing, etc.

Additionally, the public library considers the users' demands to create special workshops that are required to support the study of a specific topic.

"We receive requests from some school students to organize an Arabic grammar class which could assist them to improve their levels in this topic and it is used to be free." (Librarian)

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Furthermore, the way of learning may be changed in schools' curriculums; librarians noticed that the transformation of education tactic from initiation to searching for your information is has already started already in some schools.

"The eight years student studies how to search the information in a book, it is about research in some topics and to gather what is required, but what mostly happened with the visitors from international schools as well as some governmental schools started the same concept" (Librarian)

According to the previous statements, the student comes to use the facilities of the public library to study and research and not just to read and participate in activities. That is compatible with Chisita (2011) who stressed the ability of public libraries to act as a community center that facilitates and affects forwarding the education in developing countries. Relatively, in an Arab developing country like Egypt, the librarians' efforts concentrate on changing the mindset of learning new thing and encourage creative thinking for children users. They aiming teach the kids gaining knowledge through their searching effort. Beyond education and fun, developing behavioral and conversational skills courses are now requested by several parents. Parents want to help their kids through library visiting hours so they can accept change in a place they like to visit. For parents it is considered a cheaper place for treatment rather than private clinics.

"To support kids who suffer delayed speech or communication problems, we established new programs naming learning difficulties, skills and behavior development" (Librarian)

Here, the librarian efforts in public libraries exceed the traditional training courses to reach a new behavioral treatment services adding a new potential role of serving the society. The parents trust the public library and the librarians as a result trying to fulfill their requirements.

<u>Services for youth</u>

Today's public libraries aim holding varied types of courses to develop basic skills and sometimes advanced levels (Hapel, 2012). The study's libraries showed the efforts of public libraries to host different types of activities and courses to attract the young users and change their vision about the traditional library.

The ICT changed how public libraries look like; the youth are attracted by activities and courses besides the reading purpose. Sometimes visiting the public library is only for having a coffee or enjoying playing electronic games (Abolaji , 2009; Ghosh, 2005). The interviews expounded the decline of youth interaction with use the traditional library services and starting to use the facilities. They read

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or borrow books or study in a place with WiFi. Therefore, the librarians aim at attracting the youth to various activities that may suit them.

Currently, the youth seek the online world rather than the traditional resources. However, they still prefer visiting the public libraries to use its facilities.

"The public library's youth users are looking for what is called court spaces where it is just an empty space so they can bring their laptops to access the internet and online courses" (Librarian)

Therefore, it is possible for the public libraries to utilize open access to resources and free online services and set a package of websites for students that include educational websites and access to textbooks

"I have established an internet page for library users trying to force the private lessons profiteering via providing links to websites for free online learning and training" (Librarian)

The librarian tried to setup such vision according to the available free online resources to attract youth users visiting public libraries as they will find what is new and cope with their technological mindset.

The public library can supply the libraries with computers which could help searching for jobs and doing research (Hapel, 2012).The contribution of public libraries also has an impact on enhancing workface development via providing essential training courses (computers, job search, career development,

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and writing resume). They also offer public access to new technologies, and collaboration with many community agencies and education institutions. It could be a place to link job-seekers with adequate training providers and career opportunities (ULC, 2007).

The experience of one of the libraries shows how it successfully attracts the youth in activates. These youth users can be ready to join the job market at the time they visit and use the library resources which will reflect their future career development.

"We found them in need to work shops and training programs for free to improve their skills. Actually, I successfully organized workshops about future planning, creating a CV, recruitment, HR and what the meaning of job description is" (Librarian)

For the educational support, a library in Shoubra Al Kheima equipped a sound lab with high technology described how the public library can complete another education institution. The Media College in Banha which is lacks the required facilities of learning, its students targeting the public library to do their assignments:

"The sound lab attracted many patrons to use; students said that they mainly need a sound lab for doing assignments and training for free and equipped enough with the devices required for recording and practicing" (Librarian)

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The main problem of reaching this facility is the awareness, as a librarian claimed that many students using public libraries are not aware of how public libraries can support their education.

One of the public libraries' efforts for attracting youth goes beyond utilizing their facilities. They aim at cooperation programs with other institutions to provide advanced levels with the needed courses.

"We organized collaboration training programs with the foundation of professional painting and this was the first established program in Egypt to teach teenagers how to print professionally and not just designing through computer software" (Librarian)

Services for adults

As public libraries collaborate in personal development, their impact on developing communities which provides opportunities to learn basic life skills, hold health awareness programs (AIDS), involve in training courses, and organize classes that contributes in eradicating illiteracy (IFLA, 2013).

In fact, libraries are still facing difficulty in attracting adults to visit public libraries. They mainly perceive public libraries as places where they can attend events that are related to their kids or some interested subjects. Actually, the administration of libraries did not give up involving them and started to investigate the raised community issues to be addressed in seminars and to involve them in interested activities

"We already established workshops for drawing and learning the Arabic font, shaping metals and accessories as well as small industries such as manufacturing shampoo" (Librarian)

Moreover, the IFLA (2013) recommendations go to the public library as a facilitator for raising education and knowledge. It relatively consists of literacy campaign programs which scored many successful achievements in different countries. Utilizing public libraries' spaces is to collaborate eradicating illiteracy by holding free classes so people can come and learn how to read and write as well as learning the basic computer skills.

In this study, literacy classes are considered a basic requirement for adults through public libraries; firstly, it helps those drivers who want to issue a private driving license and need literacy certificate for that purpose. Secondly, for those mothers who failed to continue their education and they want to learn more to help their kids in studying and doing their homework.

"We aim at holding literacy classes not only to provide accreditation for illiterate persons whose purpose is issuing driving licenses, we also focus on targeting those divorced or widow mothers who are unable to complete their education and they want to help their kids in studying" (Librarian)

The impact of this on the society referred by Chisita (2011) that raising parents' knowledge level is essential to enhance their ability to communicate with their kids and support their studying. In addition, the results by The International Adult Literacy survey showed how the literacy influences the quality of the labor level and enhance the job market calibers.

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The interviewed government official also claimed to how public services can support workers in rural areas. The library collection consists of agriculture literature which was provided by the national stakeholders and other partners. Accordingly, the collection could assist villagers and reply to inquiries about specific information needed for their business (Gould and Gomez, 2010).

"We are taking into account, while implementing new public library, the nature surrounded and made our focus on the topics and collections that mainly are required for this area, therefore the design is concerned by the nature of the location as well as the beneficiaries' needs from public libraries" (government official)

The physical buildings of some libraries also provide a space for products exhibition and doing marketing through the library's Facebook official page. In some poor areas especially slums a lot of mothers are the families' breadwinner. Therefore, they are searching of public places which are affordable to rent and could be a proper place to sell their handicraft products.

"We can serve the community through public libraries; we can support by offering poor the sellers places to sell their products, so the library's role is to solve and organize the spacing issue" (government official)

One of the librarians also demonstrates the library's strategy for adults. The adults can visit the library and join activities while their kids can participate in other activities. "*We are trying to entertain and benefit parents who come with their kids*". Also, the retired people who are willing to join interested activities as they

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feel bored after their retirement. All the previous categories are taken into account while setting the strategies in the library's yearly activities.

"We have already organized workshops for crafts, painting, shaping metals and also calligraphy, and we found high attraction rate from adults "(Librarian)

Moreover, they prepare a file for those who are interested in specific topics of reading or want updated information about specific issues like national security threatens of new Suez Canal. The materials that are related to topics showed up in an open shelf in the library entrance so they can be easily accessed. Also, they sometimes provide the interested topics through seminars and discussion panels.

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Chapter IV: The challenges facing public libraries in Egypt

This chapter discusses three main elements which compose the challenges facing the public libraries in Egypt. First, the librarians who are responsible for managing the daily work procedures in libraries and are affected by the limited training opportunities as well as low wages. Second, the government's role which includes old and policies that negatively affect the development of public libraries. In addition to, the lack of financial resources which are required for the public libraries' functionality. Finally, the physical building which leads to the problems of buildings' readiness, spaces problems and the technological infrastructure. It also demonstrates how weak marketing and advertising channels have an impact on attracting citizens to the public libraries.

1.1 Librarians

The librarians are the key persons who are responsible for the people's navigation through information resources (Ghosh, 2005). Whereas, the interviewed librarians still feel that no one is aware of his/her role in serving the society through public libraries. One librarian commented about her role

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that the society should change the idea about them as just staff responsible

for arranging books.

"Till now many Egyptian institutions are not aware of our role towards the society, although our role is very important, people are still wondering when we talk about our librarianship specialization and they asked us about we are doing" (Librarian)

The people's view is old about the librarians' mission in the libraries.

They imagine a traditional model of librarian who cleans the dust on the books

and shelves volumes (Gould and Gomez, 2010).

The librarians' poor wages are not sufficient to afford basic life

requirements; they are considering finding extra jobs. Unfortunately, extra jobs

may affect the quality of the provided services and make the librarians unable to

concentrate in doing their tasks efficiently. A librarian expresses a colleague's

experience:

"He works in the afternoon in a pharmacy and gains a lot of money, so he mainly concentrates on finishing his tasks quickly "Yengz" or postponing the library's work and focused more on the place that supports his condition with a lot of money!" (Librarian)

The librarian said that his colleague's family commitments force him to

find an extra job beside his main job in the library. Therefore, the administration

has to find solutions and channels to raise such low salaries.

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Obviously, the librarian is the human element that supports the users in the library. They facilitate locating and accessing information. Accordingly, the staff training is essential to allow them to use high technologies and follow up changes in the field of librarianship. *"We need training",* this is a unified demand for all interviewed librarians. If libraries seek efficient serving they should care about raising staff skills (Rankin and Brock, 2012). In this study, participating librarians aim being professional in their positions through self-development, whereas lack of financial resources definitely affects the lack of training opportunities.

Certainly, librarians' positions sometimes lead them to act as an instructor to tech ICT basics and using the library resources (Gould and Gomez, 2010). In this study, the librarians have the will to take training sessions and then being instructors for some courses. They want to benefit the surrounded society through many activities, but are still facing resources shortage, whether equipment or training. Unfortunately, some public libraries in upscale areas hold workshops for developing librarians, whereas public libraries in lower-class areas suffer from neglecting them.

"The only way we try to share the benefit of those training session is through holding a workshop for those who visit international public libraries or has a training there to present his/her experience and then share with us such experience of the international development" (Librarian)

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The librarians were depressed by the government's look for their roles in libraries as well as serving the society. They feel unappreciated enough and their ideas or voices do not reach the government leadership, and the Minister of Culture is not active enough to praise and encourage.

"We need not only changing people's gaze for us, but we also need the government to care about public libraries and don't rely only on having a library in each school." (Librarian)

Also, there is lack of flexibility to hold many activities for adults because of the governmental policies that affect organizing specific seminars. Some librarians tried to include political and elections topics in the seminars which allow their libraries to participate in rising political awareness. Consequently, the negotiation came with failure from the administration and the Ministry of Culture. The vision of the administration is to avoid topics that are related to religion or hot topics like "Harassment". A librarian summarized such case in his words

"There are certain services that you are forbidden to thinks about" (Librarian)

The librarians have limited free space for choosing topics, because she wants the public library to be a place that discusses issues raised in the society.

1.2 Role of the government

According to the interviews, the majority of the public libraries suffer from policies and regulations that restrict daily procedures. Such policies put the library

in a narrow scope in the society and prevent us from imitating the successful countries which have already utilized the library's services to be more integrated into the community.

"Unfortunately, most libraries in Egypt work by laws and regulations from year 1960, and we have become in the internet and social media era" (Librarian)

At the current time, the governments in the developing countries do not give the attention to public libraries' vital role as it could be the center of learning new technologies on average prices (Gould and Gomez, 2010). The librarians feel when the government ignores them, this act as a barrier to the development process. The fixed polices cannot set-up new library systems or merge new services that cope with the global technological changes.

a) <u>Lack of cooperation</u>

The lack of cooperation in the public libraries is a main problem that affects work procedures and delivering services efficiency. That was the opinion of four interviewed librarians as they demonstrated the lack of clear cooperation programs among public libraries and other institutions. The public libraries are concerned of how the communication gap has an impact on delivering services. With cooperation they can prepare children for school studies during summer breaks.

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"We can raise our kids' knowledge through public libraries activities and workshops at the time we missed even the regular school visit to be aware of how to use public libraries" (Librarian)

The lack of cooperation among minsters has an impact of our existence. A librarian explained such problem of not using the facilities of public libraries. As the library collection can be shared with school libraries in the same area.

"The Minister of Education already established association for school libraries and its main purpose is to provide schools' libraries with collections and monitor activities and not give the attention to cope with institutions surround schools" (Librarian)

The public libraries are public venues required the attention from government to set them in the right position among serving agencies and local authority. As the core mission of public library is to serve surrounded community (IFLA, 2013), its effectiveness emits from the effective partnership among organizations (Goulding, 2009).

The libraries concern here is regulation and polices that related to custody. Such policies lead administration of public libraries to avoid partnership as they afraid of losing library collection. One librarian express such limitation impact; she refers the responsibility to the government through the Minister of Culture which has to issue a policy that facilitates cooperation procedures.

"We miss sometimes that we should serve all society sectors, I initiate a program to benefit enclosed companies by lending them our collection; the program target providing them with materials that serving the field of administration, statistics, and stock market." (Librarian)

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She comments that they already own good materials and no one may use them but through a successful cooperation program we can reach some interested group. The government role is to regulate polices which can solve the fears from inventory and allow flexibility.

"Rigid regulations and complex structure of administration authority block the chance of change. The users annoyed delaying apply new services that they need in the library and we have no hand to accelerate establishment waiting the approval from the governmental authority" (Librarian)

  b) Lack of fund

The fund of public libraries is another main barrier that affect their success in society serving. Without the government's support, the public libraries may not afford sustaining as efficient public serving venues (Gould and Gomez, 2010).

The study's librarians showed refers to the fund issue as a main barrier which linked to any plan for development or even the chance to exist. The public libraries costs not only in purchasing books or journals as they have to provide reading facilities chairs-tables, room, .etc.

"We already have a lot of expenditure items but we need strong fund and the government can't afford the entire library requirement" (Librarian)

The problem concern fulfills users' requirements as the activities require equipment and facilities to guarantee its efficiency and quality. In his words, one

librarian example demonstrate such problem as it is impossible to teach youth technological updates through old fashion computers!

Unfortunately, the financial sources of public libraries depend on allocated national revenue; and for those established by NGOs they secure their expenses through donations. Even some libraries set membership charges but still insufficient to plug expenses. The problem mainly concerns sustainability. Interviews showed that many libraries suffer lack of funds and low rate of national allocated budget directed to the public libraries.

1.3 Physical building

The interviewed librarians and the government official has the same thought about the lack of awareness; Although public libraries provide varied services to citizens, the lack of awareness about those entities role still dim. The problem is the society's look which yet considers public library a place to provide the traditional reading services. The decline of awareness is due to insufficient advertising for other services or libraries locations. A librarian explains such problem in locating her library place:

"Although the library has been established in 1995; users tell us this is the first time to know the existence of a neighboring public library. Also being distant to other citizens as the public library could be at the edge of the city. Previous factors hinder efficiency as few people are aware of libraries' existence while others cannot reach" (Librarian)

The advertising is essential so citizens can locate the nearest public library. Also libraries need marketing services so they can highlight their available collections and activates (Tella, 2012). "*Yes, we still here but no one aware of us",* this w response is common between librarians and the government. They link this due to the lack of marketing strategies. Although the existence of some advertisement, they are ineffective to attract users. The marketing also negatively affect the establishment of new services. Librarians said:

"It is illogic to make efforts for developing or creating new services at the time we do not know how to inform the users of what are new or actual services." (Librarian)

The librarian want the administration taking into consideration the marketing strategy to parallel creating services to guarantee the delivering efficiency.

On the other hand, many libraries ignore the marketing prospect to show up their collection and services that may attract patrons (Tella, 2012). This relatively the government official comment about those libraries which contain value materials and users may not be aware of them because of lack of marketing.

"A library in Damanhur governorate under the supervision of the local authority holds a rare collection not in any other public library in Egypt and had original book for describing Egypt in addition to other libraries in Tanta governorate own rare manuscripts and unfortunately those libraries are unknown and their collection is unreachable." (Government Official)

The libraries' physical buildings hided value materials at the time there is no even available online catalogue to show their content .This is consider a problematic issue for many researchers whom unable to find what they search for.

Despite the fact of limited spaces in the study's public libraries, they still based their acquisition policy on purchasing printed materials. This policy is not coping with global changes which recommend replacing the printed materials with the electronic ones. The current libraries trend as (Mainka, 2013; Beaudry, 2014) refers is to focus on learning spaces and strengthening internet based services to attract modern oriented users especially youth. This somehow contradict what is currently exist in public libraries.

"*We should concentrate on the electronic books more than books which occupies a large space and the latest book in the computer and technology topic is for Windows 95*" (Librarian)

He explains how that could affects the available spaces for activities or extend new reading rooms. In addition to the wasted money in non-updated sources which disproportionately with the modern technology.

Another library coped with the limited space problem through available facilities trying to keep its' beneficiaries.

 "*We encourage borrowing under the slogan (read while riding transportation) because we don't have enough chairs for reading, also we provide small carpet pieces for children to sit on it*" (Librarian)

The librarian notes that technological changes never change users' needs for books in hard copies, reading areas, and furniture like chairs and tables. Also the kids may visit the library with their IPad or tablets just to enjoy internet gaming or reading online. So they still need prepared spaces for comfortable stay in the library

Chapter V: Possible opportunities

This chapter discusses the same three elements which were previously discussed in the challenges' chapter to focus on the possibilities and alternatives of each one and overcome the problems of the Egyptian public libraries. These three elements are strengthening the librarians' skills and opportunities, the opportunities for utilizing, marketing and advertising the buildings to attract more users and finally the government's role in initiating new flexible polices that facilitate cooperation between the public libraries and with other organizations and national institutions.

1.1 Librarians

The librarians have a multifunctional role. They play an active role in the preparation of library collections, organizing and planning events and exhibits, supporting IT services, and as instructor for some training programs. (Levien, 2011)

It has been noted from the interviews that the librarians' efforts coped with the limited facilities and old policies to accomplish their duties. Also they are enthusiasm about the future changes and ready to participate any kind of public serving through public libraries.

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The librarians aim not just the traditional model of services but also creating a holistic effective role for the Egyptian Public Libraries. That showed by an interviewee whom had an extra job duty in addition to her tasks as a librarian. What optimistic is her willing to take assigned training programs to be capable enough for providing new services.

"We had a project is in need for trainers whom will train the youth on computer programs and soft skills, I examined, been accepted, and began taking the training to be an instructor for such courses" (Librarian)

Her original education background is librarianship and she already learned new topic that provide her ability toward serving the library's users as required. She is responsible for job duties as a librarian besides giving IT soft skills training for library members. So she mixed up two functions through enhancing her capability according to what job required.

"We do not stop at a certain point of knowing what is new in the field so we searching internet and try to develop our self even that is a self-help but the aim is to be aware of what is going on and how to benefit from available training and courses" (Librarian)

If public libraries aim coping with the technological changes and adding new services, they need professional experienced librarians to be able use new technologies and teach others how to use. Therefore, the training is essential to enhance the librarians' skills through adequate training programs (Ghosh, 2005).

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Accordingly, the librarians' assert that their goes beyond organizing activities, shelving, or cataloging. Their capacity as staff includes not only locating materials but also finding alternatives which require advanced level of professionalism which they gain from daily practice and training.

"We already have a colleague who promotes his effort to visit schools and provides a training program for the IT teacher. Also he advertise for a visual basic course provided by the library to simplify the government curriculum in an innovative way and it costs only 30 LE" (Librarian)

The librarians realize the problem from users and then offer the help in cooperation with the school to help students with the available resource and in average cost. Such effort showed the positive impact of librarians on society through provided services. Also, the interviewed librarians imply that they have the ability to analyze the society requirements from public libraries and they set the map of activities and services according to the citizens' demands.

The librarians' functions in public libraries become a mixture of traditional services, cultural activities, and ICT services (Hossam, 2005). Therefore, the libraries need not only calibers to run services and organize materials but also have the capacity to help users and provide research services.

Consequently, the multifunctional role of public library staff may cause changing their name as a librarians to have a wider title in the future. This was the

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expectation of three interviewed librarians and one of them has express such change through his words

"Our activities now more relative to culture so we guess the replace of our title to be cultural coordinator as a result of the integration happened in the libraries activities" (Librarian)

The librarians are ready to help more at the time they need strong and professional training programs that allow them improve the quality of provided services and add new activities. Their efforts aim not only delivering services but also analyzing what are the community's actual needs from the public library services.

1.2   Role of government

a)   Cooperation programs

The public libraries funding sources are the government through allocated public funding, the charitable societies through donations, and the library's charges for membership and activities. However, the government is still the main financier and has the authority to utilize the public libraries' physical building and facilities to provide varied public services (Ghosh, 2005). Therefore, initiating Public-Private Partnership (PPP) policy through public libraries would benefit the

government to reduce the burden of the national spending and secure other channel of funding. The PPP policy can attract the private sector experiences toward the public library space where it is a public space that includes citizens' interactions and varied services (Hapel, 2012). It would participates in the public libraries sustainability and development through the cooperation programs with the private companies (Aabo, 2005).

The study's libraries are aware of such cooperation programs' impact on their work procedures and how it can enhance the public libraries image5 One librarian describe his vision about public library is to be *"Governmental entity with private thinking"*. The libraries claim an official Public-Private Partnership policy which will contribute in the expenses for public libraries; in addition to benefit from the private sector's professional experience in managing the projects and delivering services.

The libraries are applying such cooperation concept of PPP policy but with no official policy that control procedures and regulate the cycle of Cooperation. One of the partnerships programs between an institution and public library in order to provide a training for professional printing, so they offer their experience in the field in collaboration with the library's facilities and librarians whom been the organizers for the training. The library joined such partnerships in order to the enhancement of provided services.

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Another library which initiate the idea of providing a kind of advertising for communication companies. The companies' logo will be on the public libraries membership card, in return those companies will participate strengthen the internet connection in the library.

"If we can take the sponsorship of Vodafone or Mobinil or Etisalat and put their logo as an advertisement on our library membership card, they reciprocally will provide us with a service" (Librarian)

Another librarian whom enthusiastic about the official applying of PPP which can encourage those companies to join partnership programs with public libraries:

"This kind of partnership could benefit the companies and organizations as it is considered advertising for them. Also the government's policymakers should taking into consideration to exempts a portion of their taxes" (Librarian)

In that case, the companies will 1) serve the community 2) reduce government financial burden3) benefit from advertising 4) support the public libraries.

Moreover, the public libraries mission are wide and require a lot of financial sources to cover all citizen demands. Therefore, the administration of public libraries should look for cooperation programs as an option to raise their fund. That can allow them to afford expenses the establishment of new services or to enhance the actual services (Chisita, 2011). Two librarians said that they can benefit from such partnerships in two ways; the first is in the eradication illiteracy

program which already sponsored by Vodafone and launched in many Egyptian governorate in partnership with twenty associations. The second is to strength the internet bandwidth through upgrading routers and speed up the internet for staff and library users.

The government official comments that the partnership programs are already exists. Such cooperation might not officially in a clear policy but it is concern holding collaboration programs among public libraries and other institutions.

"Such cooperation programs are already there but not diffuse, the public libraries serving surrounded organization and NGOs to host events, also some of the current public libraries have been established with the support of international organizations which they were responsible for building equipment's and work plan" (government Official)

The government official proves his words with the example of Misr-Library Zawya Al Hamra branch which implemented in cooperation with the Denmark government. He refers that the problem in Egypt is the businessmen and donors figures are not willing enough in the involvement for cultural activity.

Another librarian whom stressed the efficiency role of cooperation protocols between public libraries, schools, and the Educational Administration in a way that the students realize that the public library is vital for his/her study classes and homework assignments.

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"We need marketing campaigns to encourage reading again and retrieve the look to libraries main role and the government has to make efforts to link cooperation among libraries and minster of Education which can refresh the role of public libraries in society and citizens look" (Libraran)

Consequently, the partnership programs with national and international organization can support the public libraries to serve the community and to secure their sustainability (Ghosh, 2005).

<u>Public Libraries Network</u>

Establishing a network for libraries is a necessity to manage cooperation among libraries' branches nationwide. (Hapel, 2012, Rankin, 2012). The government official stressed the importance of linking libraries in Egypt:

"We need a Supreme Council for libraries to include all libraries in Egypt and to be responsible for drawing their policy map and combine materials records to be added in one information network and one catalogue that allow sharing materials among libraries" (government official)

His recommendation refers that the libraries linking benefit from being under one network. It will effectively manage collection development and put a guidance for selection materials (Caballero, 2003). In addition to putting libraries' services in a structured framework that allow monitoring and measuring progress (Aabo, 2005, Goulding, 2009).

The public libraries' networking leads to "create a new inclusive service model"; the public libraries will combine their efforts to avoid the duplication of

materials and raise efficiency of public libraries in community. Consequently, the users will deal with linked integrative branches rather than transact with separate branches (Beaudry and others, 2014).

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1.3 Physical building

a) <u>Merging new services</u>

The public library is an axial center that contains many activities which attract citizens as well as cooperation partners (Hapel, 2012). It can be a one-stop shops through a co-location partnership that allow it to act as a mediator office representing a local authority body to assist in fulfilling to the people's requirements (Goulding, 2009).

As each library's design reflects the priority of the services provided; the new libraries' designs should consider the future paradigm of changes to fulfill the new requirements; taking into consideration the flexibility for change to cope with the spaces required; in addition to strengthening the infrastructure which supports applying new services (Baker, 2011; Caballero, 2003).

The study's libraries give the idea and evidence of the chances of applying the government's services within the public libraries' buildings; such cooperation may encourage the participation of citizens who are hard to reach far government entities but they usually visit the nearby public libraries.

"Actually we are operating now e- coordination (Tansyq) for our library members who finished secondary school and want to apply for universities; we

started this two years ago for those who need help and they do not have access to the internet at their homes" (Librarian)

That showed the library's capability to be a portal for one of the E-Governance services. This was mentioned by Ghosh (2005, p188) who focused on the ICT availability in public libraries which has an impact on public serving. "Internationally, there is growing awareness of the capacity for ICT to transform the relationship between the State and the citizen". It is a place for everyone to use computers, internet and receive help by the librarians. Therefore, the public library has the capacity to be an official intermediator for E-Governance services for those people who do not have access to the internet or are not aware of using IT. In this case they can target the public library knowing that a librarian with a background of E-Governance services will help them using the library's computer and internet to apply for a specific service. (Abolaji, 2009)

"E-government services can attract a category of people that may not think before visiting the libraries, so it will definitely increase the number of users and according by the e-service can reactivate the role of public libraries" (Librarian)

The new merged services can guarantee new comers to use the libraries' resources which will encourage the public libraries to upgrade their services to widen their efficiency. In addition to steering new services required for the public serving.

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Another chance for public libraries is to be a recruitment center in association with private companies in a way that could merge the public and private sectors in one aim for serving the society. Such cooperation may encourage libraries to open and utilize new facilities at the time in which private sectors won a channel of hiring new staff through a public serving entity represented in the public libraries.

*"The public library could also act as a recruitment center in the cooperation with some companies. This can help in the sustainability of our libraries as they need other services to secure their existence at the time they face lack of financial resources" (*Librarian)

Actually, the librarian recommend establishing an administration for marketing, advertising, and public relation to be responsible for creating such centers in libraries and make great deals with other companies aiming at reciprocal utility.

b) Attract more users

In order to attract more users, further actions are needed, first of all, strengthening ICT infrastructure may be a key factor that would change the people's look to the public libraries' traditional model. This is because of the ICT became an essential tool for many users to access information (Gould and Gomez, 2010), the libraries which are seeking more involvement in the society need to focus on strengthening their ICT infrastructure and devices. This could support

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the transformation of public libraries to be nearly social networking centers.

(Abolaji, 2009)

Secondly, is the marketing which is became a crucial issue that can assist libraries' efficiency. It is a process of showing up what is provided by the public libraries and what the users' requirements are. Obviously, the social networking sites is currently one of the main marketing techniques that facilitate the communication and interaction with the audiences, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Flicker, MySpace, and Youtube, where they are easily accessed by millions of users. Therefore, the librarians are in need to know how to employ such websites to benefit the library and users. The librarian can present an interaction model for serving by announcing the services and events, receiving feedbacks, as well as uploading research instructions (Tella, 2012).

One librarian demonstrated a case in his library where they use the social network free websites as a main tool for preparing and advertising for events. The event was in partnership with the Korean Embassy for those audience were interested in the Korean culture.

"All interactions with youth users are through the free websites which help in creating and marketing for events. In addition to Facebook we used Eventoz and 360 Cairo to attract users to attend this event in the library" (Librarian)

He explained the impact of such marketing plan on the number of attendees in which was high and exceeded expectations. Moreover, they were

targeting to attract the library non-users to see the library's facilities while attending this event and according by they may decide to subscribe to a library membership.

Furthermore, one librarian also suggested that the library can act as a marketing station for other institutions' activities which are hard for reach or even know the events' schedule.

"The library itself would be a marketing center as we can put a flyer stand for El Sawy Culture wheel for free and bring all its flyers here, so the citizens will be aware of that Misr Library is having a stand for the El Sawy Culture wheel flyers" (Librarian)

According to the available facilities the library can establish an integrated marketing strategy among other entities which have the same mission for cultural serving. Moreover, the library will attract new users who will certainly find flyers for specific events which they are interested in without the need for visiting the entity offering this event/activity schedule.

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Chapter VI: Conclusion

Public libraries are a cultural radiation source and a center for varied services which have an impact on the surrounding environment. Their activities meet the communities' requirements through the available resources and aim at fulfilling a part of the national culture mission. The public libraries provide services to poor people, in Egypt, who cannot afford having internet access in their homes and do not have computers. Simultaneously, its facilities can be used in some cooperation programs with the other governmental entities to support the shortage of their equipment and spaces.

Certainly in Egypt, the citizens' usage of public libraries has changed, they see it as a social center that combine not only searching references and reading materials but also host other useful activities for learning and gaining knowledge. Their services have already covered different ages taking into consideration the citizens' actual needs from the public libraries.

The rush on activities in the Egyptian public libraries became clear but did not cancel the other reading services. The public libraries have research's materials and host different activities. It became closely to the concept of cultural centers where people from different ages and clusters can read, learn, and communicate. Also, the ICT became a major attraction for users, especially for youth, targeting the public

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libraries for varied purposes (learn - e-services - play ...etc.) where using the internet and computers are for free.

The three main challenges which negatively affect the public libraries' functionality are; first, the librarians are unable to join training programs to develop their skills to influence the serving quality and they believe in their vital role feeling that they are not appreciated on the national level. However, they are ready to join more training programs to cope with the international innovative ways of serving the public and to participate in raising the society's culture. Second, the government is not dragging clearly the role of public libraries in the national strategy and do not provide them with flexible and updated policies which can support their social mission. For instance, the libraries assure that old and policies are holding partnership programs among the state's institutions. As a matter of fact, the government do not give enough attention to the public libraries and their vital supportive role toward other public or private institutions. The third division is related to the buildings which show the consequence of lacking some equipment and the negative effect of poor infrastructure on services and activities. While some of the public libraries lack sufficient reading places, some others are wasting their spaces in a way that did not suit the library's services and visitors' needs. In addition to one major challenge that part of the citizens are not visiting public libraries because of the inefficient marketing strategy for services and libraries' location.

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On the other hand, the public libraries are requiring new policies to be initiated by the Egyptian government which can refresh the dim role of public libraries; such polices can add more functions that would change the traditional perception for visiting those buildings. In addition to the necessity of marketing campaigns through media and national newspapers to change the citizens' vision toward public libraries. Such marketing strategy can encourage people to visit public libraries where they can gain help about what is needed.

The public libraries networking became an essential requirement to unify efforts and guarantee good quality of provided services. Their network can maintain a clear strategy for managing those libraries efficiently.

The public libraries provide knowledge which can influence the culture of the community by providing free access to information and hosting varied social activities. They are still there but not in the traditional form of being a place that contains book shelves for reading only, but they became entities for general knowledge which offer learning courses, gathering spaces, and joining different activities. Taking into consideration the technological revolution which has a clear impact on the services' style that will awaken the necessity of strengthening the ICT in public libraries to fulfill the users' technological demands. Parallel to this, it should be reconsidered in the designated spaces for books and reading to match the digital environment and the actual social needs for courses and activities, in

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addition to looking for raising the fund options which directly support the development of staff skills through training programs and raising their wages and provide the necessary requirements for libraries whether equipment or reading materials.

The role of public libraries toward the society is currently focusing more on organizing workshops, activities, and seminars besides the reading's services. Hence, for more efficiency in the future, the public libraries should concentrate on being a facilitator for cultural activities and establishing more partnerships among cultural institutions, publishers, educational institutions, and local authorities in order to expand their role in serving the society (Hapel, 2012).

Recommendation

The following recommendations are to highlight the future possibilities for developing the functionality of the Egyptian public libraries.

1. Establish a supreme council for libraries in Egypt to facilitate working procedures and cooperation among libraries' branches.

2. Employ the technological development to facilitate archiving and digitizing the public libraries' rare collections.

3. Establishing a professional marketing administration, under the supervision of the Ministry of culture, for advertising public libraries' services and providing an actual image about their potentials and different types of services.

4. The Buildings' designs for future public libraries should be more flexible to fit the technological changes to combine digital collections with the existence of limited printed books. The focus now likely goes to activities, digital repositories, and community gathering, exhibition space, theatres, coffee rest, public events, and teaching. These varied knowledge channels require adequate spacing design to fulfill users' demands from the public library.

5. Officially merging new social services to utilize the public library physical building and sustain their opening to serve the community. Some developed countries actually started to think about renaming the public libraries and

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concentrating mainly on being a community center. This community center would be based on activities, voluntary management within social sector, cultural and social events. On the other hand, the library activities' concentrate on base lending of facilities, guidance, and local history archives (Hapel, 2012).

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استمارة موافقة مسبقة للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية

عنوان البحث : هل المكتبات مازلت موجوده؟ تعريف دور المكتبات العامه فى خدمه المجتمع

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انت مدعو للمشاركة فى دراسة بحثية عن دور المكتبات العامه والمجتمع.

هدف الدراسة هو التعريف بالخدمات التى تقدمها المكتبات العامه بما تساهم فيه فى زياده الوعى المجتمعى والنمو المعرفى والسبل المستخدمه لصالح افراد المجتمع المحيط بالمكتبات العامه والافاده المجتمعيه بشكل عام.

المدة المتوقعة للمشاركة فى هذا البحث (ساعه مع احتمال تكرار المقابله)

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