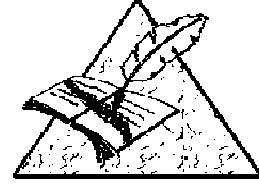




Faculty of Arts
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كلية الآداب جامعة بنها

The Utilization of Free Reference Resources in providing Reference Services in University libraries: A case Study of Benha University Libraries

**A PhD Thesis in
"Libraries and Information"**

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English Abstract

Reference services have developed significantly, shifting from their traditional form to the new non-traditional (digital-electronic) format, relying on electronic reference sources and providing new electronic services through modern communication methods. Therefore, the study focused primarily on highlighting and clarifying the value of free reference sources in providing reference services efficiently and with maximum economic efficiency in the libraries of Benha University.

The study focused on the electronic reference resources available on the Internet theoretically, focusing on their different concepts and definitions and the reasons for their appearance, as well as their advantages and disadvantages. The study also dealt with the theoretical aspects of digital reference services in terms of their various definitions, reasons of appearance, types and advantages.

In addition to that, the practical part of the study focuses on the study of the reality of the use of free reference sources available in the libraries of Benha University, and also in the libraries of the study. In this study, the researcher presented the basic frameworks for a simplified proposes plan to activate the use of free reference sources in reference services in libraries. Consequently, the identification of the requirements, equipment and procedures have been determined. Finally, the researcher enumerated a variety of free references available on the internet in various fields and then attached them to the thesis loaded into an electronic medium in order to benefit from them.

The study came up with a variety of results, the most important of which are:

- The study proved the weakness of the material and human resources available in the libraries of the study.
- Most of the study libraries did not have a special section for references and their services.
- The absence of a reference specialist specialized in reference services in all libraries of the study.
- Postgraduate students are the most category that frequently uses the reference services, followed by faculty staff members.
- The study proved that all libraries of the study use free reference sources in reference services, except for two libraries which do not use these resources (the Faculty of Specific Education and the library of Faculty of Nursing).

- The study found that the largest percentage of reference questions that the beneficiaries pose to the libraries in question are simple guidance questions and questions about selected references on a particular subject.
- The variety and multiplicity of means that libraries receive questions and inquiries of beneficiaries as well as the variety and multiplicity of means of answering these questions are as follows:
 - Attendance of the beneficiary to the library building.
 - Telephone communication at the library.
 - Communication with the library through its e-mail.
 - Use of live chat programs or "Chat with Librarian" programs for communication between the beneficiary and the library.