

The Feasibility of Providing Electronic References Services in the Public Libraries of Tehran City

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper aims to examine the feasibility of providing electronic reference services (ERS) in public libraries affiliated with the Public Libraries Foundation in Tehran City.

Methodology: This is a descriptive survey study and the research population consists of the staff of public libraries within the five districts of Tehran. The research instrument is a questionnaire that is designed by the researcher. The questionnaires were distributed amongst all of the staff (120 people), and all of them were collected.

Findings: The results showed that the public libraries don't have conditions and facilities for providing ERS. The skills and knowledge of librarians in relation to the use of ERS is average. The lack of adequate infrastructures, together with the information technology facilities for setting up these services, is the main obstacle in launching ERS. Other significant barriers to the provision of these services in libraries are a lack of support from the parent organization (the Public Libraries Foundation) and the fact that funds have not been allocated for the implementation of ERS.

Originality/value: The Iranian Public Libraries Foundation can use the results of this research to establish electronic reference services in subsidiary libraries.

Keywords: Public libraries, Iranian Public Libraries Foundation, Electronic reference services (ERS), Tehran.