

Library of Faculty ITC

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Not only has ITC existed 60 years, the ITC Library has existed 60 years too. Over this period almost everything has changed concerning the library, but in principle the role of the library remains the same – only the way we achieve this goal has dramatically changed.

Libraries and information services provide access to information, ideas and works of imagination in any medium and regardless of frontiers. They serve as gateways to knowledge, thought and culture, offering essential support for independent decision making, cultural development, research and lifelong learning by both individuals and groups. They contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom and help to safeguard democratic values and universal civil rights. Consequently, they are committed to offering their clients access to relevant resources and services without restriction. They assist people to develop lifelong literacy – the range of competencies necessary to engage fully with the Information Society. (Declaration World Summit on the Information Society WSIS and International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions IFLA)

In general, the mission of an academic library is to support the primary processes (education and research) of an academic institute by ensuring adequate provision of, and efficient end-use access to, useful scientific material. The ITC Faculty Library is a scientific library that contributes to the effectiveness of the education provided by Faculty ITC and the research conducted at Faculty ITC. The library helps:

- staff and students to find relevant information as efficiently as possible

- staff and students to present their expertise in the form of academic publications clearly presented on the ITC library web pages
- ITC to present itself as a leading international education and research organization.

An academic library should provide (electronic) books and (electronic) reference material to students to support the educational process. For undergraduate students, a basic reference collection is necessary. In addition, competent and highly qualified staff should be familiar with the latest developments in their field to update their curriculum.

If research staff want to publish in international peer-refereed journals, they cannot claim originality for what has already been discovered and they can easily make errors that have al-

ready been well documented in the literature. Without access to up-to-date information, research staff could spend time solving problems that may already have solutions in the literature. Papers that result from research undertaken without access to necessary information are probably unacceptable for publication in the highly rated refereed journals. A strong library helps with promotion through research and publications in peer-refereed academic journals. So when it comes to strengthening educational capacity and building up research capacity, access to relevant information is of really great importance. In concrete terms, this means that, within the framework of ITC's mission statement, the ITC Faculty Library has the task of improving access to scientific information, and that's why we are involved in institutional strengthening and ca-



Main Table at the Library ITC



Instruction at the Library



Study Carrousel



Study Area

capacity building projects in less developed countries. (One of these projects is described in this issue of *ITC News*.)

Investment in knowledge is more than training and education. Up-to-date knowledge is the most basic prerequisite for intellectual development as such, as well as for human development in general. Part of strengthening an academic institute involves strengthening the academic information supply within that institute. A strong academic information service can help a partner institute to become a recognized partner/university both nationally and internationally, with outreach to local communities.

Of equal importance is the teaching of students and staff members to identify, locate and evaluate information. A strong library can play a role in this process as well.

Since information technology has dramatically changed the way we collect, transfer and manipulate information, the role of a library has also changed dramatically. Today, knowledge exists in many forms, for example as text, graphics, virtual reality and simulations, and it is distributed in digital representations over worldwide networks, accessible to anyone it seems. (See also the article on Open Access on page 18.)

Students, but also staff, sometimes lack the exposure, depth of experience, and the skills required to use the library as an information resource and reference and research centre. Literacy lectures and workshops developed by the library can provide students and staff with a body of knowledge, practicum and experience in exploiting the library and its information resource applications and tools.

The ITC Faculty Library also maintains a repository of all academic publications of its scientific staff, including

MSc theses. An automated workflow is created to deliver the publications to the library and, after the library has validated the metadata in the system, the publication will automatically appear at many different places on the ITC website (for example, all researchers have their own résumés with a list of current publications). This repository is called the green road to Open Access.

Another activity of the ITC Faculty Library is the book and journal donation programme for our partners. We offer books and journals to our partners; they can choose which publications they are interested in, and the material will be sent upon request. We have also created an online system where you can choose and pick out material of interest for your local library.

Sixty years ago, the ITC Library supported partners in the ODA countries in buying books and bookcases, but by the time the cooperation had ended most of the books had disappeared and in many cases the bookcases too. This was not a sustainable way of developing local information services at our partner institutes and in that sense did not support capacity building and institutional strengthening. Nowadays, the ITC Faculty Library often fulfils more of a mentoring role.

Upgrading or changing local information services is a complicated and long-term process. Creating a digital library environment requires various conditions, for example consortia agreements with publishers for accessing the digital information, an infrastructure that enables users to access the digital library, and users who are information-literate. Creating a digital library environment requires a long-range plan, because it also implies financial consequences.

From ITC Library Guide 1989:

"Those wishing to use the automated system are requested to complete a special form, available from the Library staff, to be signed by the head of their department.

MSc-students should first contact their director of studies."

From Library Brochure 2000:

"Digital library of the Faculty ITC is open 24 hours per day and 7 days per week."



ITC Library 1985

For more information on the donation programme:

www.donationprogramme.nl