Harare Institute of Technology Library & Information Services

"stimulating scholarship in innovation"

Title: The Establishment of Virtual Libraries within Boarding Houses located in the vicinity of HIT University: Cultivating Research and Facilitating the Creation of Research & Learning Commons

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HIT MANDATE

TO DEVELOP, INCUBATE,TRANSFER & COMMERCIALISE TECHNOLOGY

Background

This is a list of universities in Zimbabwe.

- Africa University (AU)
- Arrupe Jesuit University(AJU)
- Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE)
- Catholic University in Zimbabwe (CUZ)
- Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT)
- Great Zimbabwe University,
- Gwanda State University (GSU)
- Harare Institute of Technology (HIT)
- Women's University in Africa (WUA)
- Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU)
- Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU

- Lupane State University (LSU)
- Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences (MSUAS)
- Marondera University of Agricultural Science & Technology (MUAST)
- Midlands State University (MSU)
- National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe (NUST)
- Reformed Church University
- Solusi University
- Sourthen Africa Methodist University (SAMU)
- University of Zimbabwe (UZ)

▪Apart from Zimbabwe open university which is ODL model , the rest of the Universities conventional hence demand for accommodation is high.

▪Most Universities including University of Zimbabwe the first Major university have failed to accommodate the students on campus hence the boarding house scenarios sprouting.

▪The universities can only accommodate 25-30% of their students only.

▪Landlords have adopted this as a money spinning business model.

▪Many homes within the vicinities of the universities have been changed into boarding homes and home owners relocating and dedicating this space for the model to operationalise.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the establishment of virtual libraries within boarding houses located in the vicinity of HIT University with the aim of cultivating research and facilitating the creation of a research and learning commons.

OBJECTIVES

- Investigate the existing challenges faced by students living in boarding houses with regard to studying, research, and access to learning resources.

- Explore successful examples of research and learning commons in university campuses and analyse their positive impact on student learning outcomes.

- Identify the essential components required for the creation and maintenance of effective research and learning commons in boarding houses.

- Measure the impact of establishing such spaces on student academic performance, research engagement, and overall student satisfaction.

- To propose a framework which will be adopted by boarding houses for virtual libraries

- **Expected Outcomes**:

- The proposed research aims to:

- Enhance student learning experiences and academic performance through improved access to educational resources.

- Foster a sense of community and collaboration among students residing in boarding houses.

- Provide valuable insights for accommodation providers to develop student-friendly and research-oriented living spaces.

- HIT accommodate 502 students only out of the 2500 student population
- The balance are absorbed into the boarding houses. @ HIT 60 B -Houses
- Boarding houses, are residential properties located near university campuses or in close proximity to educational institutions.
- The concept of boarding houses within university vicinities is to provide students with a convenient and affordable housing option while they are attending college or university.
- These houses typically offer individual rooms or shared bedrooms, along with common areas such as kitchens, bathrooms, and living spaces that are shared among the residents.
- Boarding houses can be privately owned or managed by housing organizations or educational institutions themselves.
- They often cater to students who are seeking an alternative to on-campus dormitories or who prefer a more independent living arrangement.

Benefits of boarding houses for students include

- **Proximity to Campus**: located within walking distance or a short commute from the university for convenience of classes and campus facilities

- **Affordability**: often provide a more cost-effective housing option compared to other alternatives such as rental apartments

- **Community and Social Interaction**: Living in a boarding house allows students to interact and build studying relationships with their peers

- **Facilities and Amenities**: Boarding houses generally provide basic amenities such as furnished rooms, Wi-Fi, laundry facilities, and communal spaces for relaxation and studying **(Green Library Concept)** . Some boarding houses may also offer additional services like cleaning, meal plans, or organized events.

- **Independence and Responsibility**: Boarding houses offer students a greater sense of independence and autonomy compared to on-campus housing options.

- They provide an environment where students can learn to manage their own living arrangements, budgeting, and day-to-day responsibilities preparing them towards bachelor & spinster life phases

Concept of Research & Learning Commons @ Universities

- **Research Commons:** A Research Commons is a physical or virtual space within a university that is specifically designed to support research activities and collaboration among students, faculty, and researchers.

- These learning spaces can include areas for group work, individual study spaces, instructional rooms, computer pools, multi-media labs and soft seating areas

- Consultation Services: Librarians, research specialists, and subject matter experts may be available to provide guidance on research methodologies, literature reviews, data management, and other research-related inquiries.

- Workshops and Training: Research Commons often organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions to enhance research skills, promote scholarly communication, and provide guidance on research ethics and best practice.

- **Learning Commons** aim to provide an inclusive and supportive learning environment for student. Academic Support Services They offer academic support services such as tutoring, writing centers, subject-specific assistance, and technology support to help students excel in their studies.

Methodology:

- Literature Review: Conduct an extensive review of academic literature, case studies, and reports related to research and learning commons in university settings, boarding houses, and student accommodation.

- Surveys and Questionnaires: Administer surveys and questionnaires to students residing in boarding houses and universities to gather data on their current study environments, preferences, and needs.

- Interviews: Conduct interviews with university officials, accommodation managers, and student representatives to gain insights into potential challenges and opportunities.

- Observations: Observe and analyze the study habits and interactions of students in existing research and learning commons facilities.

Challenges faced by students at boarding houses

▪**Wifi** : While Tel one, Net one, and Econet all offer limitless WIFI, some boarding houses would rather juice after it's all said and done to maximize on profits

▪**Limited Study & Personal Spaces:** Boarding houses might lack dedicated study areas or quiet spaces where students can focus on their academic work

▪**Hard Copies**: Depending on the location and proximity to the university, students might need to rely solely on the university library, which may involve additional travel time and logistics

▪**Lack of Collaborative Spaces:** Collaborative work is an integral part of academic life, and boarding houses may not provide adequate spaces for students to engage in group projects or collaborative research.

▪**Time Management and Academic Support:** Living in a boarding house may increase the need for students to manage their time effectively, as they navigate shared responsibilities.

Explore successful examples of research and learning commons in university campuses and analyse their positive impact on student learning outcome

- **The Hunt Library at North Carolina State University**: The library's Learning Commons provides various services, including academic support, research consultations, and workshops. It has been recognized for fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, supporting digital scholarship, and enhancing information literacy skills.

- **The Learning Commons at University of British Columbia**: The Learning Commons at the University of British Columbia (UBC) is a dynamic space that promotes active learning and collaboration. It offers a variety of services, including academic support, writing assistance, research consultations, and technology support. The space is designed to foster engagement and interaction among students, with flexible study areas, multimedia rooms, and group workspaces.

- **The Research Commons at University of Washington, USA**: The Research Commons at the University of Washington is a collaborative space that supports research and scholarly activities. It provides access to research tools, workshops on research methodologies, and consultations with subject librarians. The Research Commons also offers specialized resources for data analysis and visualization. Its positive impact on student learning outcomes includes improved research skills, increased understanding of scholarly practices, and enhanced critical thinking abilities.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR BOARDING HOUSES

- All boarding houses to be registered under student affairs

- A software development proposal is made to showcase boarding homes that are close to universities. The dean's office and the admissions office will be connected to the software.

- Students are given access to information about boarding houses as soon as they register and allocated according to programs and part

- access to biographical information so that, in the event of an emergency, they are aware of the students and their backgrounds.

- Provide training sessions or workshops to familiarize boarding house residents with the virtual library's features, resources, and tools through student librarianship

- Negotiations with internet service providers e.g. Tel one to subsidise subscriptions for registered boarding houses

- Negotiate with ENRENS like ZIMREN etc to provide services within 3-5 km radius using edu roam.

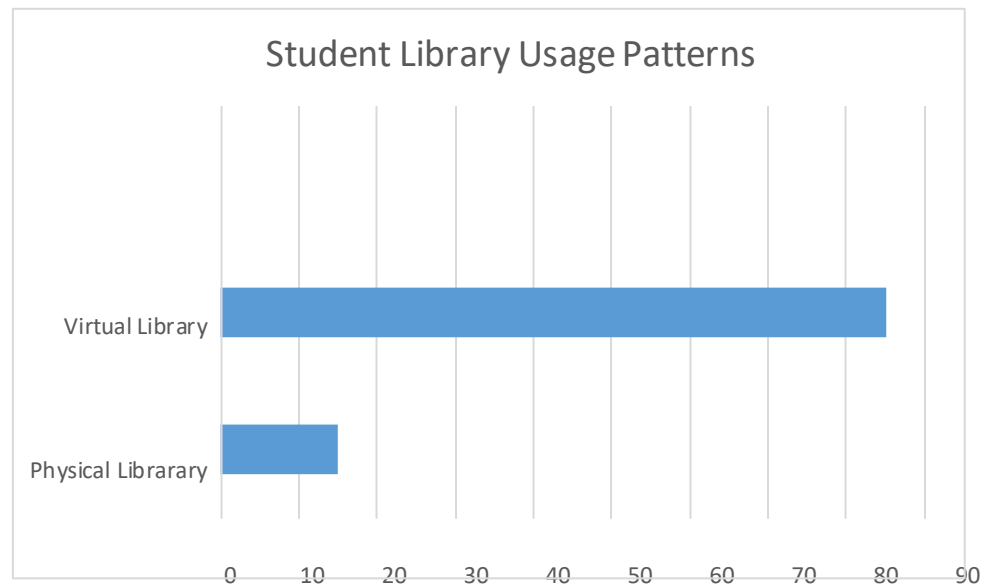- Investigate on mobile penetration & policy influence

How many registered boarding houses do we have at HIT ?

Student Satisfaction with Virtual Libraries

- This graph measures student satisfaction with virtual libraries within boarding houses. It presents a rating scale depicting the level of satisfaction students experience in terms of resource availability, ease of navigation, and overall user experience.

- Response: The graph demonstrates high levels of student satisfaction with virtual libraries. The availability of diverse resources, user-friendly interfaces, and efficient search functionalities contribute to a positive user experience. These results highlight the success of implementing virtual libraries within boarding houses and their role in cultivating a research and learning commons environment that aligns with the needs and expectations of students.

Statistics on usage patterns on virtual versus physical libraries

Student Library Usage Patterns
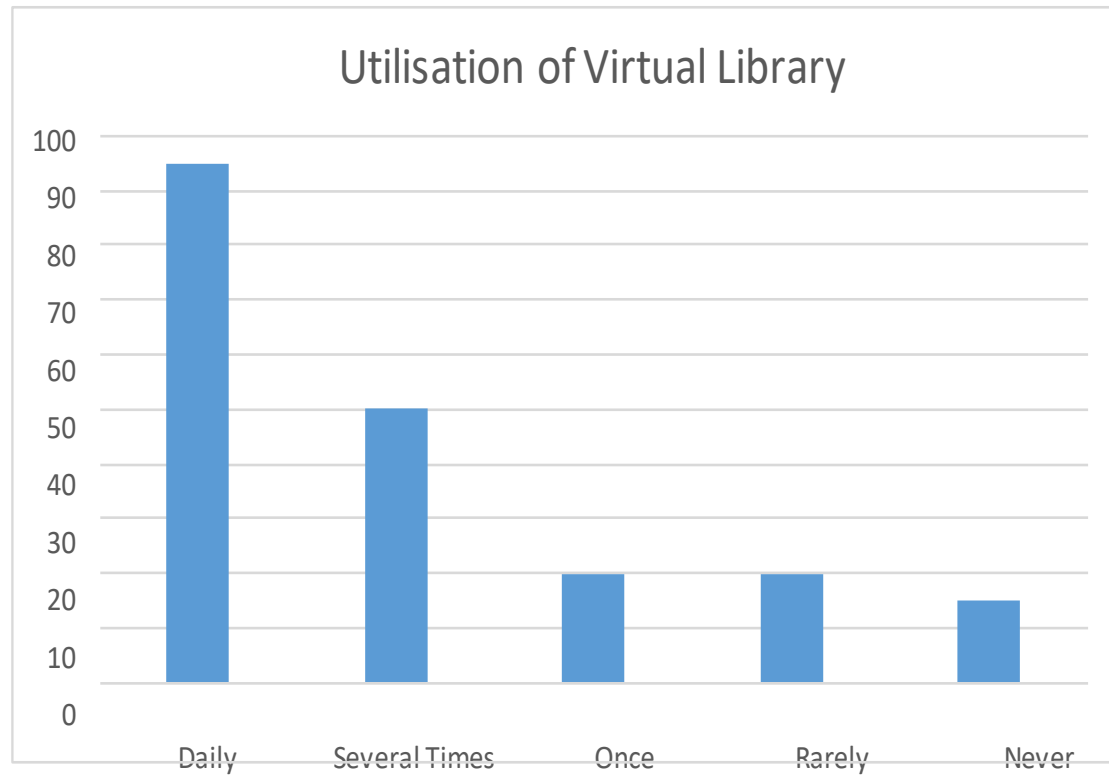
Response 1: Interview Response
Interviewee: RSD Librarian

- Question: How has the establishment of virtual libraries within boarding houses impacted research and learning at our university?

- Response: The establishment of virtual libraries within boarding houses has had a significant impact on research and learning at our university. Students now have easy access to a vast array of digital resources, including e-books, scholarly articles, and online databases. This has greatly facilitated their research process, allowing them to explore a wider range of sources and enhance the depth and quality of their academic work. Furthermore, virtual libraries have created a collaborative and interactive learning environment, where students can engage in online discussions, share resources, and collaborate on projects, fostering a sense of community and knowledge sharing among the boarding house residents.

- **Response options:**

- Daily, Several times a week, Once a week, Rarely, Never

- **Response**: Daily

- Additional comments: The virtual library resources within my boarding house have become an essential part of my academic routine. I rely on them regularly to access course materials, research articles, and supplementary resources. The convenience of having these resources readily available from my room allows me to study at my own pace and work on assignments more efficiently. I appreciate the effort put into establishing the virtual library within the boarding house, as it has greatly enhanced my learning experience.

- **Question**: How has the establishment of virtual libraries within boarding houses influenced your research practices?

- **Response**: The establishment of virtual libraries within boarding houses has revolutionized my research practices. Previously, I had to rely solely on physical libraries, which often had limited hours and resources. With the virtual library accessible from my boarding house, I have the flexibility to conduct research at any time that suits me best. The wide range of digital resources and databases available has expanded my research horizons, allowing me to explore diverse perspectives and find relevant sources more efficiently. Overall, the virtual library has empowered me to become a more independent and effective researcher
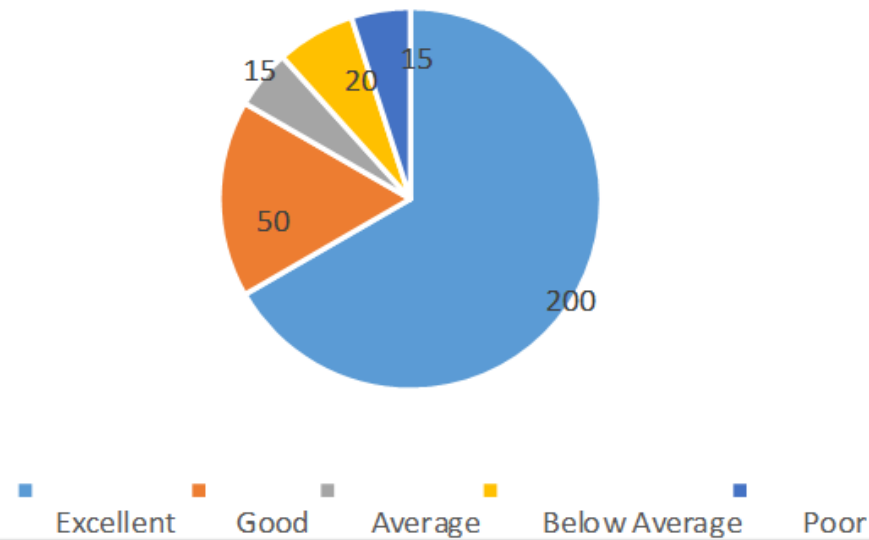
Question: How would you rate the accessibility and user-friendliness of the virtual library resources within your boarding house?

- Response options:

  Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, Poor

- Response: Excellent

- Additional comments: The virtual library resources within my boarding house are incredibly accessible and user-friendly. The platform is intuitive, making it easy to navigate and locate the resources I need. The search functionalities are robust and efficient, saving me valuable time when conducting research. Additionally, the virtual library's 24/7 availability ensures that I can access materials whenever I need them, regardless of the time of day. I am highly satisfied with the accessibility and user-friendliness of the virtual library resources provided.

Rating of Accessibilty and User Friendliness of Virtual Library

Theory (TAM)

- The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), or TAM,

- The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is designed to measure the adoption of new technology based on customer attitudes.

- Posits that there are two factors that determine whether a computer system will be accepted by its potential users (1) perceived usefulness, and (2) perceived ease of use

The Digital Library is open 24/7!

On and Off Campus

Simply Visit:

https://www.hit.ac.zw/library/

- In conclusion, the establishment of virtual libraries within boarding houses offers a promising avenue for cultivating research and facilitating the creation of research and learning commons.
- By leveraging the power of digital resources and collaborative living environments, students and researchers can enhance their access to knowledge, develop interdisciplinary skills, and foster a culture of intellectual growth.
- While challenges exist, careful planning and implementation strategies can overcome these hurdles, leading to a future where virtual libraries within boarding houses become integral components of educational and research landscapes.