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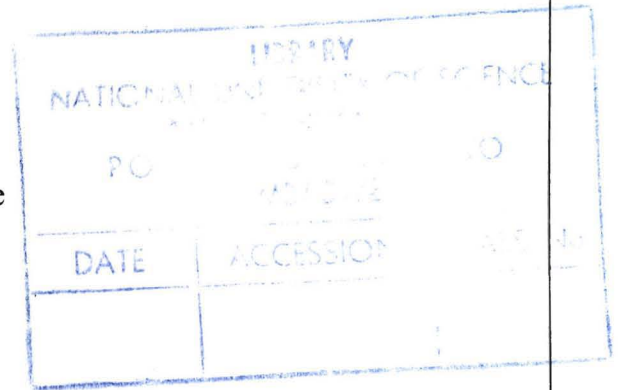
Faculty of Communication and Information Science

Department of Library and Information Science

Learning Commons as a Tool to Enhance Information Access and Collaboration at the Chinhoyi University of Technology

by

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A Research Project Submitted to the National University of Science and Technology in Partial Fulfilment of the Master of Science Degree

in

Library and Information Science

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BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

YEAR: 2014

ABSTRACT

The need to cater for the ever changing needs of the 21st century learners, has forced modern libraries to reconfigure their physical outlook through converting them into social, cultural, and technological spaces (Learning Commons) where students, faculty, and other users can gather and work collaboratively with digital and print media under one roof. LCs are a one stop shop, emphasising group work and are characterised by ease of logging on to a federated searching systems, utilising the latest Information Technology (IT) equipment. According to literature, most institutions in the developed (and a few in the developing) countries have embarked on the creation of LCs and are enjoying the benefits which include increased pass rate and improved scholarly retention due to collaboration among students. This study focused on the readiness of CUT to create LCs as a tool to enhance information access and collaboration among scholars after snap surveys revealed that 90 % of tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe have collaboration space and IT resource access constraints. As a result students have been forced to make use of inadequately resourced and poorly furnished libraries depriving them of potential learning enhancement tools. Done using largely quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering, the study was on the SWOT analysis of the CUT Library and ICT Departments' readiness to create LCs as a way of solving the collaboration space constraints as well as the need to enhance information access. After a thorough collection of data using questionnaires and interviews in a bid to answer such questions as the ability of CUT to provide state of art ICTs equipments for students and an in-depth analysis of the collected data, the findings proved that although CUT is lacking in state of art ICT equipment as well as adequate study space, it has the capacity to provide all these through purchase and construction respectively. The researcher recommended that CUT should start on the creation of their own LCs.