**Crawling and Indexing Digital Content Related to Qatar:   
The Electronic Library Institute – SeerQ**

(Panel/Roundtable Discussion Summary)

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**Introduction**

The traditional role of the libraries as exclusive information providers has drastically changed in recent times. Libraries and information centers are adapting to embrace new technologies to assist researchers, scholars, and faculty members in a rapidly growing online era. This new mode of operation goes beyond the traditional role of librarians in acquiring, classifying, and providing access to information. “Researchers are turning away from traditional publishing venues and [they] are opting to disseminate their findings and data in community vetted forums” [7].

Digital Libraries are becoming very prevalent and they create a competitive advantage for libraries as information providers. Qatar is investing in education and technology to build a knowledge based economy “characterized by innovation; entrepreneurship; excellence in education; a world-class infrastructural backbone; the efficient delivery of public services; and transparent and accountable government” [5].

**Electronic Library Institute – SeerQ**

Efforts to build and preserve digital collections are highly supported by the Qatari government. The Electronic Library Institute – SeerQ (ELISQ) is a research project funded by the National Priority Research Program (NPRP) [4]. It brings together Qatar University, Qatar National Library, Virginia Tech, Texas A&M University, and Pennsylvania State University. It aims at *researching and prototyping digital library systems and infrastructure for Qatar*, focusing initially on Qatari information related to government and scholarly communication.

The ELISQ research project team is actively seeking collections of interest to the Qatari community. Meetings take place with academic, research, and a variety of constituencies in Qatar. The collections under development are being identified, crawled, indexed, and analyzed using the Penn State SeerSuite application toolkit [9] for digital libraries and search engines. These tools will become available to the Qatari community when the project reaches its conclusion in 2015.

Another aim of the project is to *research and build the digital library community in Qatar, supporting digital library use, services, collection development, tailored systems, and advancing toward the knowledge society in Qatar*. The Electronic Library Institute is prototyping collections that are both born digital or digitized. The project team is interviewing researchers and scholars regarding their research habits, online behavior, and scholarly needs. The team investigated and compared the scholarly activities and needs at Qatar University with those from a United States study [1]. The study presents similarities and differences between the behaviors and needs of researchers in two environments. It also sheds some light on the requirements and solutions for future international digital libraries. Currently, a study on librarian’s needs and behavior is underway to understand better the dynamic activities conducted by librarians.

The project plans to conduct a quantitative study on a wider group of researchers in Qatar and investigate the special scholarly needs with regard to different disciplines. As all researchers in United States and Qatar groups have a potential to collaborate, the project team plans to experiment with systems such as CollabSeer [3] to discover potential collaborators for researchers. To address some of their special needs, the team will be investigating the use of TableSeer [6] to extract tables from within scholarly articles and ChemXSeer [8] to extract chemical formulas.

An important part of the project is to develop a “consulting center” that will serve as a hub for the digital library community in Qatar. The Qatar University Library will house the consulting center. The center will raise awareness of digital libraries principles and best practices through a series of workshops that deal with topics and skills needed for digital librarians and information specialists.

In fact, an analysis of library job posts proves that librarians require a new set of skills such as metadata, mark-up languages, programming and coding practices, web technology and more [10]. Experts will conduct seminars and training sessions and they will cover technological skills, software, and platforms.

In the light of the rapid change in the digital era, a strategy to embrace the digital community in the Arab world is crucial. It is important to support and develop search engines and crawlers to enhance Arabic content. This will allow users to access Arabic content efficiently as opposed to having them dispersed on the internet [2].

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