

.( 2004)

202  
%80.7

%7

.3686

( )

24.000

# **Availability and Use of Electronic Databases at Arab Universities**

**Prof. Dr Reima Sado Al-Jarf**

*King Saud University*

*Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

**e-mail: [reemasado@yahoo.com](mailto:reemasado@yahoo.com)**

## **Abstract**

Latest developments in information technology resulted in a revolution in library and information sciences. Acquiring electronic searching skills together with the availability of electronic resources will enable researchers to access a plethora of up-to-date information and will lead to productivity in research. This study tried to investigate the availability of electronic databases at Arab university libraries, whether faculty members can search electronic databases, and the frequency of database usage. The homepages of 202 Arab universities were browsed and a sample of faculty was interviewed. It was found that 80.7% of Arab university libraries are still traditional and lack electronic databases, including some open universities, virtual universities and universities of science and technology. All university libraries in the Gulf States except Shari'aa universities contain electronic databases. It was also found that most databases are in English; Arabic databases are lacking. Foreign universities, such as the University of Columbia in the Sudan and the American Universities of Cairo and Beirut host many more databases than Arabic universities. It was found that all electronic databases at Um Al-Qura University were used 3686 times a year only. On average, a student or faculty member uses all databases once a year. Taking into consideration that the subscription fee for a single database per year can be as high as US\$24,000, it can be said that database usage at Arab universities with database access is not cost-effective. In addition, 94% of female faculty members and 97% of female graduate students and none of the library employees at King Saud University can search electronic databases. On the basis of these findings, the study recommends that all Arab universities and research centers have a network of electronic resources, and that Arabic specialized electronic databases be created and new documents be indexed and stored on a regular basis. Researchers should be allowed to access available databases on and off-campus. Electronic publishing in Arabic should be also encouraged.