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The Awareness and Applicability of McDonaldization in an Academic Library in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Academic libraries continue to innovate its resources and services to exceed the expectations of its millennial users by reconsidering new trends in management. This is because millennials have varied attitudinal behavior, changing needs and technological skills. Library managers then need to rethink management strategies to address such and eventually to improve library services. One management concept could be the use of McDonaldization in the library. Ritzer (1996) introduced the concept of McDonaldization in his book entitled "The McDonaldization of Society" wherein he argued that the principles of the success of American hamburger chain has a great impact not only in economic patterns but also other facets of the society in general. According to Crossman (2017), McDonaldization is the rationalization of production, work, and consumption. It is characterized by four dimensions namely: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control which have favorable and irreversible changes. On the other hand, Larney (1996) stressed the negative effects which include the ecological impact, dehumanizing effect and quantity over quality in products and services. These effects are not only limited to the fast food industry but also in educational institutions particularly on the information sectors like academic libraries. The increasing pressure for colleges and universities to control costs and maximized efficiency

contributed to lessening the independence of faculty, including library staff (Quinn, 2000). However, McDonaldization concept is not a popular management concept among librarians in the Philippines. Thus, the main thrust of this study is to answer the following questions: 1) What is the level of awareness of academic librarians on McDonaldization in academic library; and 2) What is the level of applicability of McDonaldization as a management strategy in the academic library. It made use of quantitative method of research using a researcher-made survey questionnaire and was conducted in the second semester of schoolyear 2017-2018. Data were gathered from 10 professional registered librarians from Saint Mary's University Learning Resource Center, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. Descriptive statistics like median was used to describe the data gathered. Interview was also used to further deepen the analysis and interpretation of data. The study found that librarians are highly aware of the concept on McDonaldization and they revealed that it is highly applicable as a management strategy in academic libraries. Interview also revealed that unknowingly McDonaldization had been introduced or practiced in the different aspects of library work using the four dimensions namely efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. The "McDonaldized Library" is heavily attributed to the proliferation and advancement of Communication and Information Technologies. This concept has its own advantages as well as disadvantages such as dehumanizing effect among librarians and quality of library services thus it is recommended that a complete and thorough study on the use of McDonaldization as a management style in academic libraries be explored.

Introduction

Academic libraries continue to innovate its resources and services to exceed the expectations of its users by reconsidering new business management models. Their concern is to provide the users with quality services through breakthrough models, theories or principles that are rationally applicable. Moreover, the primary role of libraries is to provide the right information in the right format to the right person at the right time. However, due to the varied attitudinal behavior, changing needs and technological skills of the millennial users, library heads need to

explore new management models.   Library managers then need to rethink management strategies to address such and eventually to improve library services.   Thus, they should be on their toes to find innovative management models applicable in the library.   One of which is the use of McDonaldization in the library.   Ritzer (1996) introduced the concept of McDonaldization in his book entitled "The McDonaldization of Society" in which he argued that the principles of the success of American hamburger chain has a great impact not only in economic patterns but also other facets of the society in general.   McDonaldization is defined as the particular kind of rationalization of production, work, and consumption (Crossman, 2017).   It is characterized by four dimensions namely: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control which led to favorable and irreversible changes.   However, there are negative effects which include ecological impact, dehumanizing effect and the issue on quantity over quality.   Larney, (1996) pointed out that extremely rationalized social institutions may lead to irrationality and these effects are not only limited to the fast food industry but also in educational industry.   The movement towards rationalization has a major effect in higher education not only on the courses content but also on the process of development of a quantity oriented society particularly on the information sectors like the academic libraries.   The increasing pressure for colleges and universities to control costs and maximized efficiency contributed to lessening the independence of faculty, including library staff (Quinn, 2000).

According to Jain (2006), in his article, "Automating the bureaucracy: using McDonaldization Theory to comprehend the future evolution of e-government", McDonaldization can be a useful paradigm and framework and used to gain useful insights.   The adoption of business management models in educational institutions particularly the academic library has resulted in the increasing popularity of vision and mission statements, service quality concepts and increasing interest in leadership among library administrators.   The standardization of policies, procedures, strategies and the specialization of library work have an enormous contribution in the growth of

rationalization in academic libraries.   Students may contribute to the McDonaldization process by approaching the university library as a customer and the quality of facilities, services, and resources are evaluated as they obtain the information they need in the library.   Like customers in fast food restaurant, students want to have the best quality service in exchange for their payment.

Ritzer believes that the fast food industry, like McDonalds, has replaced bureaucracy as the ideal example of the rationalization process like in academic libraries (Quinn, 2000).   However, McDonaldization is not popular among librarians in the Philippines and unknowingly they are almost into a "McDonaldized Library".   Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine the level of awareness of librarians on McDonaldization and its applicability in an academic library.   Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: 1) What is the level of awareness of academic librarians on McDonaldization in academic library?; and 2) What is the level of applicability of McDonaldization as a strategy in managing the academic library?

Methodology

The study made use of descriptive method of research to determine the level of awareness and applicability of McDonaldization at the University Learning Resource Center (ULRC), Saint Mary's University, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines.   Data were gathered from the 10 registered professional librarians in the university through the use of a researcher-made survey questionnaire and interview conducted in second semester of schoolyear 2017-2018.   Descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation were used to describe the data gathered.   Interview was also used to further deepen the analysis and interpretation of data.

Results and Findings

Level of Awareness of Librarians on the McDonaldization in Libraries

The focus of the study is to present another perspective of librarianship using McDonaldization as a management strategy in the academic library. In 2000, Quinn (2000) put forth the idea that just as society is becoming increasingly "McDonaldized," so is higher education and by extension, the academic libraries. The argument is that we live in an age of mass higher education, in which many students attend college because they see a college education as a means to a more lucrative career, not because they love learning. Colleges and universities are under pressure from the public and governments to "control costs and maximize efficiency." Table 1 shows that the awareness of academic librarians on the McDonaldization Theory in the academic library.

Table 1.
The Level of Awareness of Librarians on the McDonaldization Theory in an Academic Library

McDonaldization Concept in an Academic Library	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. The ultimate goal of McDonaldization is to replace humans with technology.	2.40	0.52	High
2. McDonaldization improves the services of the library	2.10	0.57	High
3. McDonaldization consists of logical sequence of methods that can be completed the same way every time to produce the desired outcome.	2.20	0.63	High
4. The outcome of McDonaldization can be predicted, controlled and quantified	2.10	0.57	High
5. McDonaldization may result in desired library services	2.10	0.57	High
6. McDonaldization may be a very efficient method in operating the library	2.40	0.52	High
7. McDonaldization may result to librarian burnout	2.60	0.84	**Low**
8. McDonaldization deskills a librarian with minimum abilities to complete a simple focused task	2.30	0.82	High
9. McDonaldization libraries are slow to respond, simplistic, and short-sighted because they are out of touch with the real needs of their users	2.50	0.97	**Low**
10. The fast-food concept of quick service have the effect of raising the expectations of library users	2.00	0.67	High
11. McDonaldization minimizes the time required to complete individual library task	2.00	0.82	High
12. McDonaldization sets only achievable objectives	2.20	0.63	High
13. McDonaldization sets standards for the routine library activities	2.10	0.57	High
14. McDonaldization ensures librarians to appear and act the same	2.30	0.82	High
15. McDonaldization affects our values, preferences, goals and worldviews, identified and social relationships	2.10	0.74	High

Scale: 1 – Very High; 2 – High; 3 – Low; 4 – Very Low

It can be gleaned from the table that the awareness of librarians is "high" with a mean of 2.10. The academic librarians were aware that McDonaldization: 1) improves the services of the library; 2) minimizes the time required to complete individual library task; 3) ensures librarians to appear and act the same; 4) affects values, preferences, goals and worldviews, identified and social relationships. They also revealed that McDonaldization: 1) consists of logical sequence of methods that can be completed the same way every time to produce the desired outcome; 2) may result in desired library services; 3) a very efficient method in operating the library; 4) outcome of can be predicted, controlled and quantified; and 5) sets only achievable objectives standards for the routine library activities.

On the other hand, they also aware on the negative aspects such as: 1) It deskills a librarian with minimum abilities to complete a simple focused task; 2) McDonaldization libraries are slow to respond, simplistic, and short-sighted because they are out of touch with the real needs of their users; 3) The fast-food concept of quick service have the effect of raising the expectations of library users; and 4) The ultimate goal of McDonaldization is to replace humans with technology. This findings agreed with Larney (1996) that McDonaldization has a negative effects such as ecological impact, dehumanizing effect, and quantity over quality in products and services.

It is interesting to note that the items "McDonaldization may result to librarian burnout" and "McDonaldization libraries are slow to respond, simplistic, and short-sighted because they are out of touch with the real needs of their users" were rated as "low awareness".   This implies that academic librarians do not agree with the aforementioned concepts are applicable in the library. They continue to upgrade their knowledge in librarianship through professional readings, take up Master's or Doctorate degree, and/or initiate in-service trainings. The findings with Larney's (1996) concept that McDonaldization is not only limited to the fast food industry but also in educational

industry wherein it has a major effect in higher education particularly in the information sector like the academic library.

The McDonaldization's Level of Applicability in Academic Libraries

According to Ritzer (1996), the McDonaldization paradigm is especially attractive to service industries because they seek to emulate the success of fast food restaurant chains by focusing on the four dimensions namely: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control.   However, they continue to be a characteristics of other changing industries including libraries in either in public or private institutions. Table 2 presents the applicability of McDonaldization as a management strategy in an academic library.

Table 2. The Level of Applicability of McDonaldization in an Academic Library

The application of McDonaldization in academic libraries.	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. The use of social media in library promotion and marketing in academic libraries have become efficiently rationalized	1.90	0.74	High
2. The use of spreadsheet in compiling and computing library statistics are more efficient compiled for use as evidence of the library's performance to justify requests for budget increases	2.10	0.57	High
3. In McDonaldization, cataloging will become more and more standardized, resulting in collection content varying less from one library or type of library to another	2.40	0.52	High
4. Academic librarians using McDonaldization are typically subject to an elaborate, formalized system of bureaucratic accountability that serves as a form of control	2.30	0.48	High
5. McDonaldization's predictability is applicable in libraries' collections resulting from the use of approval plans and journal aggregator databases	2.10	0.57	High
6. McDonaldization's calculability is represented in the focus on quantity, such as inputs (like financial resources, number of staff, gate counts, number of volumes) and outputs (for instance, circulation stats, online transactions), as a surrogate for quality	2.00	0.67	High
7. McDonaldization is applicable in reference service to become more efficient and with a greater reliance on interlibrary loan and document delivery services.	2.10	0.57	High
8. McDonaldization is applicable in collection development which will result to a larger trend toward access over ownership—and standardized approaches to information literacy instruction also provide greater efficiencies	2.20	0.42	High
9. McDonaldization is applicable in standardized approaches to information literacy instruction also provide greater efficiencies.	2.20	0.42	High
10. McDonaldization is applicable in standardized approaches to enhance circulation service.	2.20	0.42	High
Overall	**2.10**	**0.57**	**High**

Scale: 1 – Very High; 2 – High; 3 – Low; 4 – Very Low

Overall, the table revealed that the level of applicability is high with a mean of 2.10. This means that the librarians are knowledgeable on McDonaldization and that the possibility of applying these in the academic library could be possible to yield better results in library services. The findings corroborated the study of Nicholson (2015) that the practice on the four dimensions of McDonaldization such as efficiency, calculability, predictability and control is evident in academic libraries.

The Principle of Efficiency. Cho (2015), defined McDonaldization's efficiency as the systematic removal of unnecessary time or effort in pursuit of the parent institution's objective. It geared towards satisfying library users' needs following closely the organizational rules and regulations to ensure highly efficient work resulting to quality services. This is characterized by increasing the speed and lowering the cost of the service. Thus, librarians are expected to perform their tasks as specified in their job description. Table 2 also revealed the applicability of McDonaldization in collection development, reference services, and the like wherein standardized approaches yields greater efficiencies in library functions, tasks and responsibilities. In the conduct of reference services, it will become more efficient in its interlibrary loan (ILL) and document delivery services (DDS). Librarians focus on things such as how quickly tasks can be accomplished and are expected to perform repetitive tasks and responsibilities as quickly as possible. McDonaldization's efficiency is exemplified through the use of standards to provide maximum efficiencies of human resources, physical facilities, library collection and services, and financial resources. Cho (2015) explained the application of McDonaldization of a library in his blog that like "the fast-food concept of quick service may have had the effect of raising the expectations of library users. Users seem less content with waiting in line for reference assistance and appear less willing to tolerate delays. Some libraries have responded by giving reference staff pagers so they can be

"beeped" if a line forms at the service desk.   The use of pagers is another example of how services in academic libraries have become efficiently rationalized."

The Principle of Calculability.   Ritzer defined the term calculability as the tendency to measure quality in terms of quantity (as cited in Cho, 2015).   The emphasis of the principle is on the quantitative aspects of products and services offered as a proxy for quality.   This principle is highly applicable in statistics wherein it is compiled for use as evidence of the library's performance.   The use of spreadsheet in compiling and computing library statistics is a concrete example of McDonaldization's calculability. It is focused on the quantity, such as inputs (like financial resources, number of staff, gate counts, number of volumes) and outputs (for instance, circulation statistics, online transactions), as a surrogate for quality.   In collection development and cataloging, standardized approaches also provide greater efficiencies.   This is further corroborated by Cho (2015) that "many college and research libraries also keep extensive statistics on everything from reference transactions, cataloging statistics, and ILL statistics to circulation statistics, entrance gate statistics, and statistics about online transactions.   Often the statistics are compiled for use as evidence of the library's performance to justify requests for budget increases."

The Principle of Predictability.   According to Cho (2015), another key aspect of the rationalization process is centered to McDonaldization's predictability.   A rational society is one in which people know what to expect.   This emphasizes an assurance that products and services are expected to be the same over time and avoiding giving surprises to customers.   Librarians are very predictive because they follow rules as well as the dictates of their managers.   It is also is applicable in libraries' collections resulting from the use of approval plans and journal aggregator databases. McDonaldization's predictability is applicable in all facets of library work and that librarians follow strictly standard in cataloging and classification, indexing and abstracting, and the like.

The Principle of Control.   Cho (2015) stated that the "final aspect of "McDonaldization is control wherein people represent the most unpredictable aspect of rationalized, bureaucratized systems, so it is people that McDonaldized organizations attempt to control.   Technology is easier to control than humans, so the ultimate goal of McDonaldization is to replace humans with technology."   This is characterized by substitution of human by non-human technology but it assures that customers receive products and services with a high degree of quality.   Librarians are well trained to use technologies to reinforce organizational control.   Table 2 revealed the application of McDonaldization in various library functions and services such as technical services, readers' services, and the like.   With the infusion of information and communication technologies, academic librarians are subject to a formalized system of bureaucratic accountability which serves as a form of control.   Quinn (2000) explained that McDonaldization is practiced in some academic libraries which is realized through the substitution of technology for human labor.   Cho (2015) elaborated that "librarian's performance is carefully documented by various means, such as systematized monthly reports to supervisors, annual or semiannual evaluations recorded on standardized forms that must be signed by both librarian and supervisor, less frequent, but periodic, review by promotion and tenure committees, and more recently, post-tenure review committees."

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found that librarians are highly aware of the McDonaldization Theory to improve library services; minimize completion time of library tasks; ensure librarians to render same quality of service to all users; and affect values, preferences, goals and worldviews and social relationships in dealing with library users.   McDonaldization consists of a logical sequence of methods to operate and produce the desired library services that are predicted, controlled and quantified in order to achieve objectives efficiently.   However, the study also revealed some disadvantages such as: 1)

librarians are confined with their simple focused tasks; 2) McDonaldized library are slow to respond, simplistic, and short-sighted with the real needs of their users; 3) quick service would result to high expectations of library users; and 4) McDonaldization will replace humans with technology. Likewise, the applicability of McDonaldization as a management strategy in an academic library was found "high". This could be attributed to the infusion of information and communication technologies in the different aspects of library work such as collection management, reference services, and others. The findings agreed with the idea of Ritzer (1996) that McDonaldization paradigm can be applicable to service industries by focusing on the four dimensions. As a management concept, it can be applicable in the library in some if not most of its functions and services.

With the proliferation of advanced communications and information technologies, the library is undeniably affected and the adoption of this would result to McDonaldized Library. The most evident of this is the gradual movement from manual system to automation of library tasks. This could not be denied or stopped because of the changing needs and demands of the millennial library users. Apparently, the academic library had been McDonaldized unknowingly. Libraries continue to improve its resources and services through the use of new business management models, theories and / or strategies to address its problems and issues. The study recommends a complete and thorough study of McDonaldization in an academic library in Philippine setting should be done in order to fully understand and disseminate this concept to other librarians and information professionals.

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