LIBRARY SERVICES FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS IN MALAYSIA

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KUALA LUMPUR

2007

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Library services for visually impaired persons (VIPs) play an important role in providing for their information needs. This study describes the current status of library services for VIPs in Malaysia. It provides information that could be useful for the improvement of library services for VIPs in this country. Questionnaires were sent to 16 public libraries (National and State) and 2 special libraries for VIPs. A 100% response rate was achieved. The key issues studied were the provision of library materials, equipment and services, and the management of the libraries. It was found that the level of provision of each type of library material studied was rather low, with more libraries not having provision compared to libraries with provision. For each type of library equipment studied, not more than one third of the libraries provided them. The services and management related to provisions for VIPs were also lacking. Only eight out of the eighteen libraries were found to have provision of library services for VIPs and were targeting VIPs as a user group. The problems and facilitating factors that affected this provision were studied. The problem most frequently faced by libraries with provision was getting in touch with visually impaired potential users. The initiative of the library directors was the most frequently mentioned factor that facilitated the provision of services for VIPs. For libraries without provision of library services for VIPs, the main factor that hindered this provision was the lack of funds. Recommendations for improvements are provided in this report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the study

Todaro (2005) begins her research article on 'Library services for people with disabilities in Argentina' by quoting Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986):

"*I, who imagined the Paradise, in the shape of a library*"

Indeed, some of us may feel that the library is somewhat like paradise to us. Some may even hope that when they reach Paradise, it would have everything a library has.

However, to someone who is visually impaired, having a library filled with over hundreds of thousands of books and magazines, computers with Internet access, databases with electronic books and electronic journals, and everything else will never be like paradise if the books are not in an accessible format, if the computers don't have assistive equipment, and if the library staff are not trained to be of assistance. Instead of being like paradise, it could very well be quite the contrary.

Libraries have come a long way, with many advances brought about by advancements in technology. Library services for the visually impaired have also advanced and benefited from better technology. There is also a growing awareness for the need of library services for the visually impaired as libraries are an avenue to obtain valuable information and knowledge not only for the sighted but also for the visually impaired.

1.1.1   Blindness / Visual impairment

According to the study conducted by Resnikoff *et al*. (2004), there were in excess of 161 million people worldwide with visual impairment in 2002. This included about 37

million who were blind, and 124 million who had low vision. This puts the worldwide prevalence of blindness at 0.57% and the prevalence of low vision at 2%.

The definition of visual impairment used in Resnikoff's study was that given in the '*International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death*', 10th revision (World Health Organisation, 1993, In, Resnikoff *et al*., 2004). Visual impairment includes low vision and blindness. Low vision is defined as "visual acuity of less than 6/18, but equal to or better than 3/60, or a corresponding visual field loss to less than 20 degrees in the better eye with best possible correction." The definition of blindness used is "visual acuity of less than 3/60, or a corresponding visual field loss to less than 10 degrees in the better eye with best possible correction."

Visual impairment could occur at any time during a person's life. Some are born visually impaired, but for most others, visual impairment occurs later in life. In 2002, more than 82% of all blind people were 50 years and older (Resnikoff *et al*., 2004). The major causes of blindness in the United States are cataract, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, macular degeneration and retinitis pigmentosa (National Federation of the Blind, 1995). There are other causes of blindness such as due to accidents (as in the case of Louis Braille) and illnesses such as high fever (as in the case of Helen Keller), but the numbers are small.

Louis Braille, the inventor of the Braille tactile print, was three years old when he was blinded due to an accident. He obtained his education at the School for the Blind in Paris, which was the world's first school for the blind. Later, he became a full Professor at the school at the age of 19. He strongly believed that the blind had to have full access

of books in order to achieve higher educational attainments (Dobree and Boulter, 1982, 197-198).

Helen Keller, a woman who contributed greatly to the blind and the deaf around the world, became blind and deaf at the age of nineteen months due to high fever. She was the first deaf-blind person to graduate with an Honours Degree from Radcliffe College. She believed highly in the education and rehabilitation of the disabled and was a great champion of this cause (Dobree and Boulter, 1982, 206-207).

For the purposes of this study, the term visually impaired persons (VIPs) will be used to denote all persons who are blind or with low vision.

Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the number of VIPs registered with the Social Welfare Department in the year 2000 was 13,743 (13.96% of the 98,452 total people with disabilities registered) (Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability, 2005). As registration with the Social Welfare Department is done voluntarily, this does not necessarily give an accurate picture of the number of VIPs in Malaysia. Many VIPs may not have registered due to reasons such as ignorance, indifference, etc. There may also be those who have become visually impaired due to old age and see no need to register.

In order to obtain another perspective figure of the population of the visually impaired, the results obtained from the report 'Global data on visual impairment in the year 2002' (Resnikoff *et al*., 2004) were used to estimate the number of VIPs in this country. The results of Resnikoff's study found a 0.57% prevalence of blindness and a 2% prevalence of low vision for the world population. However, the level of prevalence varied for

different regions. The study divided the world into 17 sub-regions, with Malaysia being one of the countries in sub-region 'Sear-B', which also included 3 other countries, namely Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand. The results of this study showed that this sub-region 'Sear-B' had a 1% prevalence of blindness and a 2.4% prevalence of low vision. This shows a higher prevalence of blindness and low vision compared to the average world prevalence.

The level of prevalence given for 'Sear-B' may not be the exact prevalence of blindness and low vision in Malaysia as the level was obtained from a study conducted in a combination of 4 countries including Malaysia. Nevertheless, the level of prevalence for sub-region 'Sear-B' can be used in estimating the population of blind and low vision Malaysians since there is no other known estimate of the prevalence of blindness and low vision for Malaysia.

In 2002, Malaysia had a population of 24.53 million (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2003, xxi). From the level of prevalence of blindness of 1% for 'Sear-B', there would be an estimated 245,300 blind Malaysians. The prevalence of low vision for this sub-region of 2.4% would mean an estimated 588,720 Malaysians who have low vision. This gives a total of 834,020 Malaysians with visual impairments in 2002.

For the most current estimate of the number of visually impaired Malaysians in 2005, the level of prevalence given by Resnikoff *et al*. (2004) is applied to the 2005 population statistics. The Malaysian population in 2005 had arisen to 26.13 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2005). If the level of prevalence of blindness and low vision obtained from the 2002 study by Resnikoff *et al*. (2004) still applies in 2005,

then the number of blind Malaysians in 2005 is estimated to be 261,300 and low vision to be 627,120. This gives a total of 888,420 Malaysians with visual impairment in 2005.

Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) and the Library

The Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) in 1966 broadened their regulations of service to blind readers to cover those not only legally blind but also to make their service available to those who because of visual or physical impairments are unable to read standard print materials (Kamisar, 1983). Thus, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), Library of Congress, (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2005a) provides the following comprehensive list of criteria for eligibility to use their services:

"A.   Blind persons whose visual acuity, as determined by competent authority, is 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting glasses, or whose widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees.

B.   Other physically handicapped persons are eligible as follows:
1.   Persons whose visual disability, with correction and regardless of optical measurement, is certified by competent authority as preventing the reading of standard printed material.
2.   Persons certified by competent authority as unable to read or unable to use standard printed material as a result of physical limitations.
3.   Persons certified by competent authority as having a reading disability resulting from organic dysfunction and of sufficient severity to prevent their reading printed material in a normal manner."

Thus, in the library context, the criteria for eligibility for use of library services for VIPs should not be limited to definitions for visual impairment such as those used by Resnikoff *et al.* (2004). If this definition is used, it may restrict people who are not within the limits of this definition but may have some form of impairment that restricts them from reading printed materials, from using library services for VIPs. Besides those

who have visual impairment, library services for VIPs should also be provided to those who because of physical disabilities are unable to read standard print materials. For example, this would include those who are unable to hold a book or turn a page.

1.1.2 Public libraries

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), in its publication "*The Public Library Service: IFLA / UNESCO Guidelines for Development*", gives a detailed definition of a public library. It goes:

> *"A public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, employment status and educational attainment"* (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2001).

Public libraries in Malaysia

According to the Directory of Libraries in Malaysia, the public libraries in Malaysia are categorized into national, state, municipal council, branch, local council, mosque, district, town, village, mobile and cyber libraries. The directory lists Malaysia as having a National Library and 14 state libraries, one for each of the following states: Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, Terengganu, and Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 2002).

However, the National Library of Malaysia's website lists 15 State Public Library Corporations. The additional one being the Labuan Public Library Corporation (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 2004). In a telephone conversation with a Librarian at the National Library of Malaysia's Bahagian Rangkaian Perpustakaan [Library Network Department], he stated that the Labuan Public Library Corporation is not an official state public library as there is no official state public library in Labuan. However, it is the largest library in Labuan. It is also run by a Public Library Corporation and does receive some development funds from the Federal Government (Mohd. Azmi, 2006).

In Peninsular Malaysia, the public library services are provided by the State Public Library Corporations. In Sabah, the situation is different as the state library is a state government department. As for Sarawak, the public library services are provided by the state government and local government authorities (Singh, 1998).

The National Library and the 14 state libraries are separate entities. Each State Public Library Corporation governs the public libraries in their state. The National Library of Malaysia is a government department. The National Library assists the state libraries by channeling Federal Government funds for the development budget. The Federal Government also provides 50% of the state library corporation's annual operating budget and the balance is provided by the State Government (Mohd Azmi, 2006).

Public libraries and VIPs

The provision of library services for Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) is not a new service provided by public libraries, especially in developed countries like the United Kingdom and the United States.

In the United Kingdom, the provision of library services for the blind by public libraries began in 1857 at Liverpool on the initiative of R.W. Roulston, Superintendent of Lending Libraries (Cowell, 1903, 52, In, Kelly, 1977, 80). This was followed by Manchester in 1863 (Edwards, 1869, 95, In, Kelly, 1977, 80).

In the U.S., the history of public libraries providing services to the VIPs also dates back to the 19th century. Herman (1977), in writing on the origins and development of library services for the blind in the US, states that the receipt of eight embossed volumes by the Boston Public Library in 1868 showed the first efforts by public libraries in servicing the blind. Several libraries followed suit. Nevertheless, only in 1897 did a national library programme develop upon the establishment of a reading room with 500 materials for the blind by the then Librarian of Congress, John Russell Young.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were at least eighteen public libraries in large cities in the US with services for the blind (Public Libraries, 1904, In, Lovejoy, 1983). In 1931, the Pratt-Smoot Act came to law on the 3rd of March and $100,000 was appropriated for the fiscal year 1932 "to carry out the provisions of the act to provide books for blind adults and the program that would become the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS/BPH) was established" (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2005a).

Not much has been documented about the provision of library services to VIPs by public libraries in Malaysia. "Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia: Satu Kronologi 1966-1996" [National Library of Malaysia: A Chronology 1966-1996], a book about the chronological events of the National Library of Malaysia from 1966-1996 states that on the 27th of November 1996, the National Library of Malaysia held a ceremony to

officiate audio books for VIPs (Jamilah, 1997). In Sabah, library services for VIPs were launched in Sabah State Library in August 1996. Persons who have visual or physical disablity are eligible to use this service provided for free. Besides the Sabah State Library, the Sandakan and Tawau Regional Libraries also offer this service in Sabah (Wong, 1999).

1.1.3   Libraries specializing in services for VIPs in Malaysia

The 4th edition of the International Directory of Libraries for the Blind lists two libraries for the blind in Malaysia (Nomura and Yamada, 2000). They are the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) Braille Resource Centre in Kuala Lumpur and the library at St Nicholas Institute for the Visually Handicapped in Penang. There are other libraries specialising in services for VIPs such as libraries in schools for the blind. However, this study concentrated on special libraries which provide their services for the visually impaired public.

The Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) was established in 1951 by the Department of Social Welfare. Some of the services provided by MAB are its educational programmes, rehabilitation courses, vocational training and placement service. It has also established an eye hospital in its quest towards the prevention of avoidable blindness. Its Braille Resource Centre offers services which includes the publishing of Braille books, the loan services of Braille books and talking books, sales of Braille equipment, repair service for Braille machines, loan service of Braille equipment and book scanning service through computer (Malaysian Association for the Blind, 2005).

St Nicholas Institute for the Visually Handicapped is a school for the visually impaired. It was established in 1926 by the Medical Mission in Malacca and moved to Penang in 1938. St Nicholas has a separate library for children known as the Children's library. Here, besides the usual library services, story telling sessions and games are also held (Habsah, 1994).

The Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB), St Nicholas Institute for the Visually Handicapped, the Sabah Society for the Blind, the Sarawak Society for the Blind, and the Society of the Blind in Malaysia together form the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM). This NGO was established in 1986. It publishes a quarterly magazine in English called the NCBM Outreach, and operates the Malaysian Braille Press which produces Braille materials at subsidized rates (Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability, 2005).

1.2   Research problem

It is unfortunate, however, that even though there has been progress in the provision of library services by NGOs to VIPs, not much has been documented about this provision by the public libraries in Malaysia. Although Mariam (1994) mentions that the provision of services for VIPs had always been one of the national library's long term objectives, it is also acknowledged that the provision of library services for VIPs in this country was mainly left to the NGOs (Shellatay and Mariam, 1996). This should not have been the case as public libraries have great potential to play a very important part in providing services for VIPs.

Malaysia has a National Policy on Library and Information Services in Malaysia that sets out strategies in order to achieve the systematic and planned development of library

and information services in this country (Shellatay, 1994). According to Shellatay (1994), one part of the strategy touches on library services for the disabled and stipulates that "appropriate library and information services commensurate with the needs of the under privileged and handicapped members of society shall be provided".

NGOs have a long history and expertise in providing library services for VIPs while public libraries have the resources and facilities to reach out to VIPs around the country. Habsah (1994) believes that libraries specialising in services for VIPs and public libraries should work together by co-operating with each other. The libraries specialising in services for VIPs with its publishing facilities can concentrate on production and the public libraries can concentrate on delivering the services to clients through their established outreach units.

At the 1996 IFLA Conference in Beijing, Shellatay and Mariam (1996) stated that:

> "*Malaysia has chosen to overcome this challenge [of the provision of library services to the VIPs being left to NGOs] by adopting a policy of mainstreaming library services, programmes and resources to the VIPs. As the information needs of VIPs are much the same as those of the general public, all services provided by the public library should also be made available to people with disabilities.*
>
> *Mainstreaming or integration refers to the concept that services for VIPs should be provided in the same manner as they are for others. People with visual impairments should not be segregated, excluded and provided special services in isolation. Instead they should be part of the mainstream. They should be included as participants in providing an integrated full service within the library setting.*"

Since the above statement was made nearly a decade ago, it would be useful to find out the current situation of library services provided by libraries specialising in services for VIPs in Malaysia, and to find out how far public libraries in Malaysia have moved forward in their provision of library services for VIPs. This would also serve as a

measure of accomplishment of the National Policy on Library and Information Services in Malaysia.

1.3 Research objectives

Consumers have demands which are brought about by their needs and wants. VIPs, just like their sighted peers, have needs and wants pertaining to library services suitable for their use. They need library services in order to access materials or information that they would otherwise have great difficulty or be impossible for them to attain on their own. These materials or information may be used for purposes pertaining to their work, their education, their self-improvement, or for leisure.

Whatever the need, VIPs should have equal access to library services. Thus, "it is inevitable that the blind will be expecting their libraries to provide them with the services which most respectable libraries serving sighted readers offer" (Gashel, 1977). This is more so when it comes to public libraries as VIPs are rightful members of the public. It is then part of the objective of this study to find out about the current provision of library services for VIPs by both the public libraries and libraries specialising in services to VIPs in Malaysia.

Besides finding out the current level of provision of library services for VIPs, the problems faced by libraries in providing library services for VIPs and the factors that facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs need also be investigated. As according to Shellatay and Mariam (1996), "the development of library services to the visually impaired has had its own fair share of challenges, barriers and constraints". Thus, in order to see that services for VIPs be further developed, the problems faced by libraries today with reference to their provision of services for VIPs should be brought

to light. Also factors which have facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs should be discovered to help facilitate the provision among libraries which currently do not have provision of library services for VIPs.

Public libraries have the responsibility of providing its services to all persons without leaving out any group of person. The IFLA / UNESCO Public Library Manifesto published in 1994 (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 1994) states that: "The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison."

It is thus part of the objectives of this study to find out if there were any public libraries in Malaysia which did not provide services for VIPs. If there was found to be libraries which did not provide this service, then what were the factors that have brought about this non-provision.

In summarising, the objectives of this study are to find out (a) the current level of provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia, (b) the problems faced by the libraries with reference to this provision and the factors which had facilitated this provision, and (c) the factors that influenced the non-provision of library services for VIPs.

1.4   Research questions

In line with the research problems and research objectives discussed earlier, the research questions for this study can be broadly divided into the 3 following questions:

1. What is the current status of the provision of library services for VIPs by public libraries and libraries specialising in library services for VIPs in Malaysia, in terms of the provision of materials, equipments, services, and the management of their libraries?

2. For libraries with provision of library services for VIPs, what are the problems faced by them, and what are the factors that facilitated the provision of this service? and

3. For public libraries without provision of library services for VIPs, what are the factors that hinder them from providing this service?

1.5   Scope of the study

For the purpose of this study, the scope included public libraries in the National and State categories (Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, Terengganu, Kuala Lumpur and Labuan), and also special libraries providing services for VIPs (Braille Resource Centre of MAB and St. Nicholas Library). The study did not include all categories of public libraries, such as branch libraries, village libraries and mobile libraries, as the state libraries control most of the libraries in their state.

This study also did not include academic libraries such as university libraries and school libraries. This is in order to stay more focused on libraries which provided services to the public at large, and not on libraries which only provided services to a certain category of people such as university students or students of a particular school.

1.6   Significance of the study

It is unfortunate that sometimes the demands of VIPs were taken lightly due to the fact that they only constituted a small portion of the population. No study like this could be located in the public domain and thus not much is known about library services for the VIPs in this country. Most of the previous studies conducted on library services for VIPs were conducted in developed countries.

It is hoped that this study would help bring about a change in this country to help ensure that even though VIPs are a small minority of the population, their needs must still be addressed. Each and every VIP should be given the opportunity to excel and be a contributing member of society. One of the ways of achieving this is by providing for the information needs of VIPs, as called for by a Government official, "people with disabilities (PWDs), like all other citizens, should have full access to all information so that they can develop their full potential and participate on equal terms with others in society" (Mohamad, 1994).

In line with Malaysia's Vision 2020, towards a more caring society, the needs of VIPs must be looked into. The needs of the less fortunate must not be overlooked in the quest towards becoming a developed nation. It is hoped that through the recommendations of this study, the situation of library services provided for VIPs both in the special libraries and in the mainstream public libraries will continue to be improved as the country develops.

1.7   Limitations of the study

This study was exploratory in nature. It explored the current status of library services for VIPs, the problems and facilitating factors in the provision of library services for

VIPs, and the factors that hindered the provision of library services for VIPs. These are explored within the limits of its sample size.

In selection of the sample for special libraries serving VIPs, the International Directory of Libraries for the Blind (Nomura and Yamada, 2000) was used. This directory was published in 2000, thus any changes since then was not taken into account.

Another limitation would be its sample for public libraries. Even though it was mentioned that the state public libraries control most libraries in their state, this study did not obtain information on the services provided by these other libraries in the state library.

Also the information obtained from the questionnaire replies from the libraries was assumed to be accurate and only minimal verification of information was done.

Thus, even though the results of this study may be generalised, there are limitations. In spite of the limitations, the findings of this study have provided insights into the provision of library services for VIPs in this country.

1.8   Definitions

<u>Braille</u>

Braille is a form of tactile print which consists of raised dots. It is three dots high and two dots wide. Braille is read by using one's fingers to feel the raised dots.

<u>Braille Translation Software</u>

This is a software that converts text on a screen into Braille.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems / CCTV

This system is used to magnify by using a camera on the image and then magnifying the image on a monitor screen.

DAISY

DAISY is the acronym of Digital Accessible Information System. It is a technology which allows CDs which are DAISY formatted to have such features such as navigation by page or by chapter, the placing of bookmarks, the increase of the reading speed of the text, etc.

Large print books

Large print books are printed books with larger size printing. The minimum size for large print materials is 14-point type.

Magnifiers

A device that can make things appear larger.

Magnifying lamps

A magnifying device that helps reduce glare.

Refreshable Braille Display

This device creates Braille characters of the text displayed on the screen by raising and lowering an array of pins on its display unit.

Screen magnifiers

A magnifying device that magnifies screens such as computer or television screens.

<u>Screen readers</u>

This is a software application that translates text on a screen into speech.

<u>Talking book / magazine / newspaper</u>

Talking book / magazine / newspaper is the audio recorded version of the book / magazine / newspaper.

<u>Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs)</u>

Visually impaired persons consist of persons who are blind or have low vision.

1.9   Organisation of the report

This report is organised into 5 chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction. It gives an overview of library services for VIPs with some emphasis on the situation in Malaysia. It also presents the research problems, research objectives and research questions. This chapter states the scope, significance and limitations of the study.

The second chapter is the review of literature. Here literature on library materials, library equipments, library services, and library management is reviewed. Literature on problems and facilitating factors in the provision of library services for VIPS, and literature on the factors that hinder the provision of library services for VIPs is also reviewed.

The third chapter is on the research methodology. This chapter details the research method, the selection of the sample, the research instrument used, data collection and the method of data analysis.

The fourth chapter presents the results of the survey and the analysis of the data collected. The final chapter provides a summary and discussions of the findings, the recommendations and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Purpose

A review of literature was conducted to gain knowledge through previous writings on the provision of library services for VIPs. Besides reviewing previous research, this literature review also sought to review relevant information on important aspects of the provision of library services for VIPs. These important aspects include the provision of library materials, library equipment, library services, and library management. It also includes the problems faced by libraries providing services for VIPs and the facilitating factors in the provision of these services; and factors which hinder the provision of library services for VIPs. This literature review is intended to provide a better understanding of the topic.

Section 2.3 of this chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the first research question of this study about the current status of provision of library services for VIPs. Section 2.4 reviews the literature concerning the second research question on the problems and facilitating factors in the provision of library services for VIPs, while Section 2.5 reviews the literature pertaining to the third research question concerning the factors that hinder the provision of library services for VIPs.

2.2 Approach

The approach taken to obtain literature on this topic was to search in the following information sources and databases:

(i) Books

Searches were conducted from the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) of the University Malaya Library (UML) and the OPAC of the National Library of Malaysia.

(ii) Journal articles

Electronic journal articles were searched for from online databases. These articles were research or non-research based. The online databases searched included Emerald Intelligence + Fulltext, Expanded Academic ASAP Plus @ INFOTRAC, Library Literature & Information Science Full Text @ WilsonWeb, LISAnet, and ProQuest.

(iii) Conference papers

Conference papers in both print and electronic formats were searched. The print format was searched from UML's OPAC and the National Library of Malaysia's OPAC. As for conference papers in electronic format, a search was conducted of the IFLA (International Federation of Library Association and Institutions) website and also using the Google search engine.

(iv) Dissertations

Relevant dissertations were searched for using Digital Dissertations (UMI) @ ProQuest and also UML's OPAC.

(v) Online articles / information

Articles and information were also obtained online by conducting online searching using the Google search engine.

Various keywords were used to conduct the searches through the OPAC, the online databases, and the online search engine (Google). These keywords include *blind, visually impaired, visual impairment, print handicapped, library services, computer assistive technology, Braille, large print,* and *magnifiers*. Some of the keywords were used separately and some were combined to obtain the most relevant search results.

2.3   Current status of provision of library services for VIPs

No known previous research could be located on the current status of provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia. Two studies were found to have been conducted in the United Kingdom which were about the provision of library services for VIPs by public libraries from the service providers' perspective. These studies differ from the author's study as the present study includes both public libraries and special libraries. Also, the two studies were conducted in a developed country, whereas, Malaysia is still a developing country. Nevertheless, both studies provide important and relevant information to the body of knowledge of this topic.

One of the UK studies was by Craddock (1985) on "The Public Library and Blind People: A survey and review of current practice". This was the first large scale research conducted on this topic in the UK and it has set precedents for subsequent studies (Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001). This study had the main objective of finding out the role of public libraries in the provision of library services for the blind in the UK. The results of the study found that "few libraries have identified the blind as a target group and that the dominant role is one of referral to other agencies" (Craddock, 1985, iv).

Although the study by Craddock (1985) had provided much insight to the provision of library services by public libraries in the UK, the results were about two decades old and did not reflect the state of current provision.

The other research on the provision of public library services for VIPs in the UK was a study conducted in 1999 by The Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU) at Loughborough University. The research team comprised of Professor Margaret Kinnell, Liangzhi Yu and Claire Creaser. The aim of this research was to find out whether the public library services for VIPs were up to the standards set out in the Library Association National Guidelines, and to find out if there were any changes since the research done by Craddock (1985) and the survey conducted by the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) in 1997. (Evans, 2000)

The 1999 LISU survey found that a significant minority of libraries did not have a specific policy statement, most did not have a specific budget allocation for VIPs, one third of staff had no basic visual awareness training, and there was a decline since 1997 in close ongoing relationships with other agencies working with VIPs (Kinnell, Yu, and Creaser, 2000). Some of the findings will be discussed in the relevant sections in this chapter.

In Argentina, a research study was conducted on library services for people with disabilities by Todaro (2005). Her research focused on libraries which provided services for visually impaired and physically handicapped people. It touched on areas such as type of institution, management of resources, personnel, services, book collections, materials processing, statistics of activities, building facilities and budget. Todaro (2005) concluded that the libraries had many things to correct and to improve upon. She

recommended that in order to improve access to information for people with disabilities, Argentina should have an integrated library approach based on the UNESCO manifesto for public libraries where the public libraries should be meant for all (including the disabled).

2.3.1 Library materials for VIPs

There are various library materials in formats used by VIPs that allows them to independently gain access to information. The formats preferred by individual VIPs would depend "… on their personal circumstances such as eyesight, onset of vision impairment, living arrangements, age, level of literacy and nature of the materials or information to be accessed" (Astbrink, 1996, 5, In, Williamson, Schauder and Bow, 2000).

Sadly, 95% of books available worldwide are never made available in accessible formats such as Braille, large print, or analogue or digital audio (Right to Read Alliance, UK, (n.d.), In, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2006).

2.3.1.1 Braille Materials

VIPs are unable to read standard print materials. Thus, tactile script to VIPs is the equivalent to printed materials to the sighted person. Since the development of tactile script, there had been many different forms of it. The most common form of tactile script used now is Braille. It is so commonly used as a tactile script that it has been endorsed by UNESCO as "the only tactile script parallel to print" (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 1998). Braille can be used as a tactile form even for music, mathematics and scientific notations (Wintle and Archer,

1983). Braille has not only helped VIPs obtain information with their fingertips, but have also made significant contributions to users' quality of life. Surveys were conducted in North America and Europe by The Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille, the Washington State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (WSLBPH) and the CNIB Library for the Blind. The surveys found that "those who learned Braille as their original reading medium and used it extensively were more likely to develop positive reading habits, were employed at higher rates and most likely to acquire graduate degrees" (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 1998).

Since Braille has such a positive impact on the lives of the visually impaired, it is unfortunate to note that in a developed country like the UK, only 3% of the estimated one million VIPs were Braille users (Bruce, McKennell and Walker, 1991, In, Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001). This research is however quite dated and may not reflect the proportion of current Braille users.

Braille was developed by a Frenchman, Louis Braille, in 1834. Paris officially adopted Braille in 1854 (Lovejoy, 1983). The year 1932 marked the year that Standard English Braille became the common system throughout the English-speaking world (Wintle and Archer, 1983).

Braille can also be enjoyed not only in the physical book format but also in electronic format. In 1999, the Library of Congress launched Web-Braille which makes available a collection of electronic Braille books online. It allows users to download or use the electronic Braille books online (LC launches Braille books online, 1999, 26). The International Braille Research Center also provides electronic Braille books which can

be obtained online from its Electronic Braille Book Library (International Braille Research Center, 2005).

2.3.1.2 Talking Books

In the US, Congress established the Talking Book Program in 1931 and it was administered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) at the Library of Congress (Auld, 2005).

Since 1931, the talking book programme has gone through some technological changes. From the original 33 1/3 rpm records, to the 16 2/3 rpm records in the 1960s, and finally to the 8 1/3 rpm records. The slower speed reduced the number of records required to hold a book. Records then gave way to audio cassettes (Taylor, 2004, 49). Audio cassettes are the most common talking books at this moment in time, especially in developing countries like Malaysia.

In the 2001 LISU survey on library services for VIPs from the users' perspective, it was found that 83% of the 482 respondents used sound recordings or talking books as a reading format. Of these who used sound recordings as a reading format, 75% preferred cassettes, and only 3% preferred CDs. There could be many reasons for the low preference towards CDs such as CDs were a newer format then and preferred by mainly the younger population, whereas, the majority of VIPs are the elderly who would be more comfortable using cassettes. (Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001)

With constant changes in technology, the trend is to move from cassette talking books towards digital talking books. Digital talking books provide better sound quality, the ability to read an entire book without manipulating the equipment, and improved ability

to skim text and insert bookmarks. In the mid-1990s, the NLS started a programme to design a digital talking book suitable for its service. NLS decided on using a flash memory-based device instead of using CD-ROM or magnetic hard drive for its digital talking books as NLS found the flash memory-based device more reliable for its services. The size of a flash memory-based device is larger than a credit card but smaller than a cassette and is capable of holding compressed digital files for one 12-hour book. However, patron use of these new digital talking books is estimated to begin only in 2008. (Taylor, 2004, 49)

Scheppke (2005), In, Auld (2005) was critical of the NLS plan due to the time frame it will take to finally take off in 2008. NLS's patrons were requesting for digital talking books but were unable to utilise any digital form of talking books and had to still rely on cassette talking books. Countries such as the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Great Britain and Japan were ahead of the United States as they have been providing digital talking books to VIPs through CD format. The VIPs in Canada has been benefiting from a CD production and distribution system that was developed by their very own Canadian National Institute for the Blind with the help of on Canada and IBM Canada.

However, Gray (2005), In, Auld (2005) mentioned that rather than to rush towards a solution for the transition to digital talking books, it is better that the transition be well organised and executed for the benefit of the whole visually impaired and physically impaired community.

DAISY technology

The Netherlands uses the DAISY technology. DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) was developed in 1996 by an international consortium of libraries for the blind.

The DAISY formatted CDs can be played on a DAISY compatible player which allows features such as navigation by page or by chapter, the placing of bookmarks, the increase of the reading speed of the text, and the player can also play commercial audio books and music CDs. In the Netherlands, about 1.2 million DAISY formatted CDs are produced and distributed yearly from a production facility. Production is done on demand and thus involves no costly inventory. The CDs are returned to the production centre and are disposed of while the packages of the CDs are reused. (Scheppke, 2005, In, Auld, 2005)

2.3.1.3 Large Print

Some VIPs are able to read print books which have large type sizes. These books are known as large print books. Large print books for adults were first produced in England in 1964 by Ulverscroft. In 1965, Keith Jennison started selling the first commercial American large print books (Lovejoy, 1983, 15).

The NLS reference circular, "Reading Materials in Large Print: A Resource Guide", provides sources of large-print materials for purchase or loan from the United States. Large print reading materials come in various type sizes. "Type is measured in points from the bottom of the lowest letter (for example, the tail of the letter "y") to the tallest capital; type one-inch high measures 72 points. Most adult books are set in 10- to 12-point type, newspapers are often 8-point, and some editions of the Bible are in 6-point type. The minimum size for large-print materials is 14-point type. Large-print materials are most commonly available in 16- to 18-point type" (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2005b).

The minimum type size to be eligible for free postal service to VIPs in the United States is the 14-point type. Titles of large print books vary and even magazines like Reader's Digest is available in large print (Wintle and Archer, 1983, 241-2).

The survey by LISU on the provision of library services for VIPs from the users' perspective (Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001) investigated user's preferred format for four different categories of items: small items (e.g. leaflets); magazines and newspapers; fiction; and non-fiction. The proportion of users who preferred to use large print for small items were 14%; magazines and newspapers – 9%; fiction – 8%; and non-fiction – 10%. In all categories, the proportion of users who preferred large print was higher than those who preferred Braille.

2.3.2 Production of accessible format library materials for VIPs

As mentioned earlier, accessible format library materials for VIPs consists mainly of Braille materials, talking books and large print materials. These materials may be produced commercially. However, due to the lack of commercially produced accessible materials, libraries and organisations serving VIPs have been known to produce their own materials especially Braille materials and talking books.

Craddock (1985), in his study, found only 12 out of the total 152 public libraries surveyed in the UK produced their own talking books or Braille materials. Clark's (1984, 79) survey on Braille and talking book producers around the world found that there were a larger number of organisations (104) producing talking books and a smaller number of organisations (95) producing Braille books. This could be due to the trend in users' demand. "Analysis of growth in talking book and Braille book production by the Library of Congress in the United States of America has indicated a

steady growth in talking book use, and a relatively flat or steady demand for Braille books" (Clark, 1984, 87). This, however, does not mean that Braille has declined in importance. The use of Braille materials is very important in the education and employment of VIPs as mentioned in section 2.3.1.1.

In Malaysia, the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) set up the Malaysian Braille Press (MBP) on 1st April 1998. Its purpose was "to meet the acute shortage of Braille materials for education, leisure and to complement the efforts of organisations serving the blind and the Department of Special Education in the production of Braille textbooks" (Lau, 1999). The MBP uses computerised Braille production to produce its Braille materials. Lau (1999) states that Braille production through the traditional methods such as manual brailing, thermoforming, zinc plate printing and so on, will not be able to cope with the increasing demand of Braille materials. The 5 basic requirements to running a computerised Braille production unit are:-

(i)   computer and word processor

(ii)   Optical Character Recognition (OCR) System

(iii)   Braille Translation Software

(iv)   Braille embosser

(v)   Braille display unit

These 5 basic requirements for running a computerised Braille production unit are also equipment that are used by VIPs to assist them in assessing information. Thus, libraries or organisations can use these materials for both Braille production and also as equipment provided for VIPs to use.

According the Kerscher (1999), computerised Braille can also be produced by using XML files from DAISY Digital Talking Books. The XML files are "imported" into the Braille Translation Software. This eliminates the need to use the OCR to scan print materials. The Braille Translation Software must be written to support the DAISY / NISOXML specification. If producing Braille can be done through DAISY, then there will be a convergence in producing digital talking books and Braille materials.

The role of volunteers in the production of accessible format materials
According to Habsah (1994), volunteers are a valued resource in helping in the production of materials for VIPs. According to her, the most common tasks that were performed by volunteers at the St Nicholas library are reading to blind braillists, reading to be recorded into talking books, data entry, scanning, and editing.

The survey published in 1984 (Clark, 1984, 78) on the current practice of the production of reading materials for VIPs around the world, found that for the production of Braille materials, only 30.4% used volunteers and 23.2% did not use volunteers at all. The balance of 46.7% did not answer the question. The information on the use of volunteers in the production of sound recordings or talking books was, however, not obtained in this survey.

2.3.3 Library Equipment for VIPs

Not many VIPs may have access to all or any of the equipment or products that are able to assist them in accessing information. Thus, the library is able to play an important role in providing some of these relevant equipment to meet the needs of the visually impaired users. Evans (2000) states that "while it was difficult to assess the levels of equipment required for the user population, it was clear that most authorities had

insufficient equipment available …". The equipment that are provided by libraries to VIPs can be categorized as talking book players, magnifying devices, and computer assistive technology.

In Dorman's (1995) review on products available in the market that were suitable for library use, he reviews products from two companies, Xerox and Telesensory. Products by Xerox Imaging Systems included Reading AdvantEdge (optical character recognition software package), DECtalk (synthesized speech card) and the Reading Edge (consists of a scanner with a keypad control unit, OCR software, and DECtalk synthetic speech). The Reading Edge allows for the output speed, the inflection of the speech and voice quality to be controlled by the user.

TeleSensory Corporation has a vast range of products. The products mentioned in Dorman (1995) were Aladdin which is a personal reader able to magnify by up to 25X; V Voice which provides synthetic speech for text appearing on a library's OPAC; ScreenPower which enables VIPs navigate Windows applications by giving voice feedback (if used with a voice synthesizer) or Braille feedback (if used with Braille-output devices); OsCaR is an optical character recognition product that recognises 11 languages and can recognise any two languages simultaneously; and PowerBraille 40 which is a Braille pad which produces refreshable Braille of text from the screen.

Dorman's review showed that there was a wide variety of equipment or products available in the market to assist VIPs. The advancement in technology is constantly increasing and improving the equipment available.

2.3.3.1 Talking book players

Talking books are popular among VIPs. The type of talking book players available in a library would usually depend on the format of the talking books available in that library. If the library provides audio cassette talking books, then, they should also provide audio cassette players for loan or for use within the library premises.

Craddock (1985) found that only 17.1% or 26 out of the 152 public libraries had a policy for the provision of cassette players for VIPs. This included the provision of cassette players for use in the library premises, provision to hospitals, on loan, as part of its mobile resource centre, and so on.

2.3.3.2 Magnifying Devices

The NLS Reference Circular on "Magnifying devices: A resource guide" (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2002) divided magnifying devices into 4 categories: magnifiers, magnifying lamps, screen magnifiers, and closed-circuit television and enhanced vision systems.

Magnifiers

17.8% of public libraries in the UK had a policy for the provision of magnifiers for VIPS (Craddock, 1985). Magnifiers can be divided into various types, which vary in weight, styles and functionality. The various types are bar magnifiers, binocular magnifiers, dome or globe magnifiers, fresnel magnifiers, hand-held magnifiers, neck or pendant magnifiers, page magnifiers, pocket magnifiers, and stand magnifiers (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2002).

Magnifying lamps

A magnifying lamp is another type of magnifying device. It is used to help reduce glare while reading or viewing. A magnifying lamp can be "attached around the head with Velcro, stands on the floor, or attaches to a desk, table, or chair, usually with an adjustable arm" (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2002).

Screen magnifiers

Screen magnifiers are used for computer screens or television screens. Screen magnifiers usually consist of hardware and software. The hardware consists of the screen magnifier themselves. Some screen magnifiers are used by attaching them to the monitors, some others are mounted on a base made of various materials such as oak or rubber. The various software differ in terms of times of magnification and also their compatability with the various word processing, database and spreadsheet applications (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2002).

Closed-circuit television systems (CCTVs)

Closed-circuit television systems (CCTVs) can magnify, and adjust the brightness and contrast of print and graphic materials electronically. This is done by using a mounted or portable camera on the material. The image will then be magnified on the monitor screen (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2002). "Magnification has adjustment ranges determined by the size of the television monitor with maximum range from 45 to over 60 times the original" (Alliance for Technology Access, 2000, In, Brodwin, Star and Cardoso, 2004).

2.3.3.3 Computer assistive technology

Advancement in technology, especially in computer assistive technology, has brought about many benefits to the disabled. "Assistive technology (AT) has increased functional abilities, independence, and access to mainstream society, creating a method of equalization between persons with and without disabilities" (Brodwin, Star and Cardoso, 2004).

People with disablities lack access to computers with assistive technology (Lenhart, 2003, 30, In, Information access for people with disabilities, 2004). This is not due to their lack of interest but more so due to the fact that they are unable to afford computers and assistive technology equipment. As a group, people with disablities are poorer than other Americans. The situation worldwide would probably be quite the same. A small scale study conducted in Australia on the information seeking of VIPs found that the most frequently mentioned barrier to accessing the Internet was cost (Williamson, Schauder and Bow, 2000).

Libraries can play an important role in the provision of access to computers, the Internet and other computer assistive technology suitable for the use of VIPs. The study by Williamson, Schauder and Bow (2000) concluded that the provision of adaptive software on standard equipment by public libraries can help alleviate the barrier of access to VIPs due to the cost factor.

Computers and Internet access

The United States Census Bureau's 1999 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) found that in the United States "almost three-fifths (57%) of people without disabilities, compared to one-fifth (21%) of people with "limitations in seeing", have

access to the Internet – a major difference … people with no disabilities are also much more likely than people with visual impairments to use a computer "on a regular basis" (51% versus 13%)" (Gerber and Kirchner, 2001).

Even though there is a major difference in the use of computers and in the access to the Internet between people without disabilities and people who are visually impaired, this digital divide cannot be left unsolved. Computers and the Internet have given VIPs the opportunity to obtain vast amounts of information even at its most current release, for example through daily newspapers available online.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project did a study in December 2003 and found that since the year 2000, the number of people using the Internet for information–seeking purposes had increased by 50% (Information access for people with disabilities, 2004). Libraries can assist a larger number of VIPs to use the Internet as an information–seeking tool by providing access to computers and the Internet.

Scanners and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) System
Scanners are valued not only by VIPs but they are also very useful to people without disabilities. Scanners are used to scan text/print materials into computers. An OCR system then converts it into a readable file in the computer. The accuracy level of an OCR is about 95% - 98% and would be affected by factors such as "clarity of the page, writing patterns, colour of the words" and the placing of the page that is being scanned (Lau, 1999).

Screen Readers

Screen readers are the software application that is needed to translate text into speech. The features provided by screen readers "include graphic translation; screen portion selection; compatibility with internal or external speech synthesizers; and rate, pitch, and volume control" (Alliance for Technology Access, 2000, In, Brodwin, Star and Cardoso, 2004). The Job Access With Speech (JAWS) is probably the most popular screen reader in North America (Information access for people with disabilities, 2004).

Screen readers may have no problem reading text but problems arise when it comes to graphics. Web designers do not bother to caption graphical portions on a web page, thus, screen readers are unable to make sense of the graphics (Wade, 2003). Organisations with web pages (and this includes libraries) should take the time to ensure that their web pages are accessible to VIPs. Harvard University created a set of guidelines for web designers in order to rectify problems in web pages such as the lack of description for graphical elements and unlabelled frames (Harvard University, 2001, In, Wade, 2003). The Center of Applied Special Technology (CAST) has created a software named Bobby that can evaluate web pages for accessibility (Center for Applied Special Technology, (n.d.), In, Wade, 2003).

Braille Translation Software

Braille translation software has the capability of converting text into Braille contractions of a certain language (Lau, 1999). Some Braille translation software allows users to input their own Braille contractions into the Braille table which will be incorporated into the software. This feature is very useful for those whose language does not have a Braille translation software. Once the Braille translation software has

converted the text into Braille contractions, it can then either be printed out by a Braille printer or read by the user using a Braille display unit.

For the conversion of Bahasa Melayu text into Bahasa Melayu Braille contractions, the St. Nicholas Home in Penang pioneered and launched the Bahasa Melayu Braille Translation Programme in 1995 (Shellatay and Mariam, 1996).

A well-known example of a Braille translation system in English Braille is the Duxbury Braille Translator (Shellatay and Mariam, 1996). Currently, the "Duxbury Systems supports two different Braille translators: the Duxbury Braille Translator (DBT) and Megadots (DOS application). The DBT, a multiplatform, multilanguage product, is recognized as the most functional commercial translator in the market." (Information access for people with disabilities, 2004).

Braille printers / embossers

Braille printers are able to print / emboss Braille onto paper. Before the Braille printer can print Braille, the text has to be scanned or inputted into the computer and then the relevant language's Braille Translation Software is used to convert the text into Braille contractions.

Braille printers are able to print on one or both sides of the paper and may vary in printing speed, line width and type, and weight of paper used (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 2000). Some Braille printers may also have features such as speech output to assist in printing navigation and may also print graphics (Brodwin, Star and Cardoso, 2004). Graphics can be translated into tactile

print by a tactile image-maker. The tactile print can be interpreted by a person with low vision (Wade, 2003).

Refreshable Braille display

The refreshable Braille display unit creates Braille characters by raising or lowering an array of pins (LC launches Braille books online, 1999, 26). To describe the workings of this equipment in further detail, the Library Technology Reports states "As the cursor follows the lines of text displayed on the screen, tiny pin actuators raise and lower to translate the print into Braille cells, which the patrons are able to feel with their fingertips. Moving to the next line refreshes the pin alignment to reflect the new text." (Information access for people with disabilities, 2004). This assistive technology is useful for users who do not wish to print the text in Braille but only wish to read the text. Most refreshable Braille displays are "lightweight, compact and easily portable" and the device reduces the bulk storage that arises with embossed Braille (Brodwin, Star and Cardoso, 2004).

Reading Devices

The Optacon Reading Machine was developed by John Linville and James C. Bliss (Clark, 1983, 260). This reading device is used by moving "the lens module across a line of print, and the image under the lens module is transmitted via the connecting cable to the main electronics unit. The tactile array in the main electronics unit contains a matrix of tiny metal rods which are vibrated to form a magnified tactile representation of the image being viewed by the lens module". In 1996, Telesensory ceased manufacturing the Optacon. Since then, other companies have tried to develop an updated version of the Optacon, however, none has yet to be developed. The Optacon is

still being used by many blind people today as it offers capabilities that no other device offers (Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia, 2006).

The Kurzweil Reading Machine, a print-to-speech reading device, was invented by Raymond Kurzweil in the mid-1970s (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 1983, 177). This machine consists of a scanner which will scan the text, an image-analysis system which will recognise the characters of the text and a programme to generate synthetic speech (Clark, 1983, 261). Reading devices have also advanced with technological advances. According to Dorman (1995), Raymond Kurzweil recently estimated that today's state-of-the-art scanner or voice synthesizers have 80 times the performance yet cost 1/30th as much as the originally invented Kurzweil Reading Machine.

2.3.4   Library services for VIPs

Besides the usual library services provided by libraries such as loan services and reference services, other library services that are of importance to VIPs and can greatly enhance library services for VIPs are the postal services, interlibrary loan services, and mobile library services.

Besides library services, library staff play an important role in ensuring that the needs of VIPs are well taken care of. Staff trained in the provision of library services for VIPs can truly enhance the library services provided for VIPs. Thus, the training of staff in the provision of library services for VIPs will be discussed in this section.

2.3.4.1 Training of staff

In the UK, a study by LISU in 2000 found that one third of staff never received any basic visual awareness training (Evans, 2000). In addition, only few non-specialist staff had training in areas such as the use of assistive technologies and equipment (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000).

Some libraries may not have the expertise to train their staff in the provision of services for VIPs. Organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the National Library for the Blind (NLB), UK, are there to help in providing training for staff of libraries working with VIPs. CILIP provides "on-site training on understanding disability and visual impairment, and on ways to achieve best practice" (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2005). NLB provides "training packages for libraries on working with visually impaired people, accessible formats, sources of help, using the Internet with access technology, and so on" (Brazier, 2005).

The training of staff is important not only to provide good service for VIPs, but it can also provide positive effects to relationships with other organizations working with VIPs. Kinnell, Yu and Creaser (2000) found "a clear relationship between staff practices and the development of formal working relationships with other relevant organizations working with visually impaired people."

2.3.4.2 Postal services

In the United States, the postal laws were amended in 1904 to allow for free postage of books to the blind (Lovejoy, 1983, 3). In Malaysia, Section 15(1) of the Postal Services Act 1991 (Act 465) (1991) states "The minister may make rules as to the exemption of

the Government, its agencies or any class of persons for postal charges on letter-post items and from commissions, fees or other charges payable for services rendered.".

Malaysia, being a developing nation, may not have as many libraries as in other developed countries. Due to the small number of libraries which provide materials for the visually impaired, postal services provided by the library is important. It is probable to say that not every single VIP lives within convenient travelling distance to the nearest library serving them. Thus, it is quite a necessity to provide this service to the VIPs.

The Sabah State Library, one of the state libraries in Malaysia, provides library services for VIPs which includes postal services. In 1999 there were 43 registered users of this postal service who were able to request and receive audio cassettes through the mail. Pos Malaysia (the Malaysian national postal company) provides free postage (Wong, 1999).

In the UK, the study done by Craddock (1985, 28) found that 11% of the total 152 respondent libraries provided postal services for the handicapped. This percentage was very much smaller than he expected, given the importance of this service to those who are handicapped including VIPs.

2.3.4.3 Interlibrary loan services

Interlibrary loan is defined by Evans, Amodeo and Carter (1999) as "the process by which a borrower in one library obtains the use of books, periodical articles, or other library materials from another, sometimes distant, library." Interlibrary loan is an important service that allows libraries to benefit from each others' collection. Users may request through their library for documents or materials not available in their

library but available in another library which has an interlibrary loan agreement with their library.

In the UK, the use of legislation, namely the Disability Discrimination Act, can impel the public libraries to provide interlibrary loan services for alternative format materials. The following is stated in Chapter 11 of Library Services for Visually Impaired People: A Manual of Best Practice (National Library for the Blind, 2001, In, Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001):

> *"Although an inter-library lending (ILL) system has been established for many decades for standard print material, alternative format material has been excluded from this co-operative network. This has resulted in visually impaired people being offered a much reduced service in accessing a range of reading and information material in a format, which meets their needs. Under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act, it will be unlawful for libraries to refuse a request for alternative format materials, and the inter-lending system must therefore be able to process this requirement."*

The promotion of international interlibrary loan materials for print handicapped readers was one of the goals set up by IFLA's Section of Libraries for the Blind in its medium-term programme for 1998-2001 (Sköld, 1999). The International Directory of Libraries for the Blind was identified as an important tool to promote international interlibrary loan. This directory is also available online at the URL http://ifla.jsrpd.jp/ (Nomura and Yamada, 2000).

Libraries serving VIPs located outside of the United States, like in Malaysia, can benefit from the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and

Physically Handicapped (NLS)'s international interlibrary loan services. Materials available for loan through this service are braille books and specific back issue Braille magazines, and talking books and specific back issue talking magazines. Music materials from the NLS Music Section such as specific instructional recordings, braille and large-print scores, and books about music and musicians are also available for loan. NLS provides these materials to foreign libraries when the materials are needed by specific individual users of that foreign library (National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 1990).

Cataloguing of accessible format materials

Accessible format materials need to be catalogued in order for users to know what is available and where it is available. This will greatly encourage the use of interlibrary loan services for accessible format materials.

In the UK, a national based project called Revealweb: the National Database of Accessible Resources has managed to create an online catalogue of accessible format materials covering over 200 libraries and organisations (Brazier, 2005).Users need not search for accessible format materials by accessing each library's / organisation's OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) but instead they can just access one website which is the Revealweb website at the URL http://www.revealweb.org.uk/ (Revealweb, n.d.). Revealweb also allows users to search for suppliers who are able to produce, loan or sell accessible format materials.

2.3.4.4 Mobile library services

A mobile library service brings the library to those who are unable to, for some reason or other, visit the library. Mobile libraries are especially important to those who are living in rural areas, institutions, hospitals, etc.

Chairat (1999) in his paper on the "Mobile library service for the blind and visually handicapped in Thailand" reports the situation at Caulfield Memorial Library. Caulfield Memorial Library is the first library for the blind in Thailand and is currently the major source of library materials for VIPs. There was no mobile library service at Caulfield and it was suggested that in order to improve the situation, cooperation should arise between Caulfield and other existing mobile library services.

2.3.5   Management of library services for VIPs

This section on the management of library services for VIPs touches on various aspects of management which are important for the management of library services for VIPs.

2.3.5.1 Policy

In a study carried out by LISU in 1999, only 5% of respondents had an explicit policy statement for VIPs. Others had policy statements for other areas which included VIPs. However, 42% of respondents did not have any written policy statement at all for VIPs. The research also found that libraries with an explicit policy statement had provided the most average number of different special services, followed by libraries with a policy in other areas and incorporated VIPs, and finally the lowest average number of special services provided went to libraries with no policy for VIPs. This showed a relationship between the existence of a policy statement and the meeting of a wider range of special

needs. A clear policy statement has the functions of being "a planning tool, a means of promotion, and a key performance indicator" (Evans, 2000).

2.3.5.2 Budget

The 1999 research by LISU found that less than 30% of libraries had a specific budget allocation for services for VIPs (Brazier, 2005). The research also found that most libraries did not know the number of visually impaired members in their library, or who lived in the authority. This is clearly unsatisfactory and it was recommended that all authorities should have statistics on expenditure per thousand population (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000).

2.3.5.3 Relationships with agencies working with VIPs

Kinnell, Yu and Creaser (2000) believe that UK public libraries have a considerable scope for improvement in terms of ongoing relationships with other agencies serving VIPs. Their study noted a fall in the percentage of libraries having ongoing relationships as compared with the study conducted by RNIB in 1997.

Brazier (2005) in her paper presented at the 71st IFLA General Conference and Council in Oslo, Norway, discussed the types of partnerships between UK public libraries and libraries specializing in services for VIPs. She felt that the existing level of partnership was not sufficiently good enough due to lack of integration in management and funding. She urged the government to integrate specialist library services for print-disabled people with mainstream public library services, and also, provide funding.

2.3.5.4 Library concessions

According to Kinnell, Yu and Creaser (2000) some library concessions are made for VIPs. However, many services are not provided on a concessionary basis. If there are library concessions given, they are usually for the free loan of audio materials.

2.3.5.5 Library access

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (2005) website gives a briefing on "Library and Information Services for Visually Impaired People" and mentions library access. Some of the points mentioned on the provision of easy access are: a bus stop should be located no more than 50 metres from the library; a drop-off point or parking space should be located closest to the entrance; level of ramped access; doors that are clearly marked; lifts with floor numbers in raised characters or Braille; lifts with voice announcement identifying each floor; hazard-free environment with good colour contrast; and good lighting.

The 1999 LISU study found good coverage of basic access to buildings such as allowing guide dogs and the existence of automatic doors (Evans, 2000). The study recommended that libraries should undertake an audit of access for VIPs, informed by surveys from the VIPs' perspective (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000).

2.4   Provision of library services for VIPs: Problems and facilitating factors

One of the objectives of this study was to find out the problems or challenges faced by libraries in their provision of services for VIPs, and also the factors that facilitated the provision of this service.

2.4.1   Problems faced by libraries providing library services for VIPs

No previous research was found on the problems faced by libraries providing library services for VIPS. Also not much non-research based literature could be found on this topic.

Ng'ang'a (2003) presented a paper at the 69th IFLA General Conference and Council about Kenya's experience concerning the provision of services to the print handicapped by public libraries. In this paper, Ng'ang'a (2003) presents a list of 10 challenges faced by the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS). The challenges were:

"   (i)   The society perception of the Visually Impaired Persons who are viewed as people who require sympathy and alms rather than being empowered.

    (ii)   Cultural barriers and beliefs that discriminate against the visually impaired persons who in most cases are viewed as social misfits hence most of them are hidden away in the houses from the public.

    (iii)   Inadequate information materials in Braille, large print and other alternative formats. …

    (iv)   Inadequate availability of equipment used by Visually Impaired Persons…

    (v)   The high poverty levels have greatly discouraged the visually impaired persons (especially the unemployed and school drop outs) to seek for knowledge in the library. …

    (vi)   Lack of proficiency in Braille. …

    (vii)   Lack of transport for transporting information materials to the visually impaired in their homes, designated service points, etc.

    (viii)   Inadequate trained manpower to handle the visually impaired library users.

(ix)   Inadequate storage space for books in Braille which comes in multiple [volumes] per title.

(x)   Limited mobility by the visually impaired persons who require to be guided to visit the library."

The challenges faced by the Kenya National Library could also be similar to those faced by public libraries in other countries especially in developing countries like Malaysia. Besides the challenges listed by Ng'ang'a (2003), there are other problems which seemed quite relevant in the provision of library services for VIPs.

One of the main problems faced by libraries in their provision of library services for VIPs is inadequate funds. For special libraries serving VIPs, the lack of funds can be the biggest challenge faced. According to Habsah (1994) the biggest stumbling block was the source of funds which dictates the continuity and extent of services. These special libraries are wholly dependent on public and private funds. Due to the lack of funds, 70% of budgets are taken up by staff salaries, with only the 30% left for collection development and extending services.

Public libraries in Malaysia are better off as their financial needs are provided for by government funding. The National Library of Malaysia receives its funding from the Federal Government. The state libraries receive both State Government funding and Federal Government funding. However, since public libraries provide a wide range of services, services for VIPs may be given lower priority. Thus, obtaining sufficient funds for services for VIPs could also pose as a problem for public libraries.

The lack of funds has also affected the number of staff working in special libraries (Habsah, 1994). Thus, there is a reliance on volunteers especially in the production of accessible format materials for VIPs. Volunteers are greatly appreciated but the high reliance on volunteers could affect the production process. This is because volunteers may not be available at all times. Thus, the production of materials will have to depend on the availability of volunteers. Another example would be in the recording of talking books, the reader has to have the right quality in terms of pronunciation, intonation and expression (Habsah, 1994). Thus, only volunteers with these qualities can assist in reading for recording, and volunteers with these qualities may not easily be available, causing the slowing down of the production process.

The lack of awareness among VIPs concerning library services can also pose as a problem. Zahra (1994) mentions that VIPs might have poor knowledge concerning library services. This lack of knowledge could result in low levels of usage of library services for VIPs. Wong (1994) also states that there is a great number of VIPs who are unaware or reluctant to use library services, and thus, more promotions should be conducted. Zahra's (1994) and Wong's (1994) statements were confirmed in the study conducted by LISU in 2001 which found a "high proportion of people were unaware of the existence of the various services which were available and the agencies that operate them" (Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001). To solve this, the study also suggested sustained promotional campaigns. According to Hovious (1994), creating awareness is critical to develop and promote library services for VIPs. She adds that awareness should not only be created in potential customers but also in those in the library profession in order for the library profession to develop the appropriate services.

In trying to create awareness and promote library services for VIPs, libraries may face the problem of getting in touch with potential visually impaired users. A significant number of VIPs are not registered with the Social Welfare Department. According to Mohamad (1994), the absence of reliable data would hamper the efficient planning and provision of services to the disabled. However, even though the problem in getting in touch with potential visually impaired users exists, the marketing and promotions of library services for VIPs can still be successful. The papers presented by Zahra (1994) and Hovious (1994) may be more than a decade old but still give valuable information on the marketing and promotions of library services for VIPs.

2.4.2   Factors facilitating provision of library services for VIPs

Although the author found no previous literature on the factors facilitating the provision of library services for VIPs, it was felt that finding out about the facilitating factors is also an important part of this study. The findings may help empowered parties to take action in encouraging the provision of library services for VIPs in libraries which have yet to provide this service.

Since the author found no previous literature, it was felt that there could be three facilitating factors relevant to Malaysia, and explanations were provided on why the author felt these factors could facilitate the provision of library services for VIPs.

Directives from the Government

Directives from the Government could be a possible facilitating factor. This may be more relevant to public libraries. Since some public libraries are Government departments, and all public libraries receive their main funding from the government, it is assumed that the Government has a level of governance over these libraries. Thus, the

directive and support from the Government could have been the facilitating factor of some libraries providing services for VIPs.

Initiative from the library's Director

The library's director holds the highest leadership position and thus could play a very important role in facilitating the provision of library services for VIPs.

Request from NGOs

NGOs such as societies, associations and institutions for the visually impaired represent the collective voice of VIPs. Thus, NGOs may have seen the need and demand for library services for VIPs and may have requested for more libraries to provide this service. Where there is demand, there is (hope for) supply.

2.5   Non-provision of library services for VIPs: Factors that hindered provision

In finding out the current status of provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia, it is felt that in order to complete the picture, factors that hindered the provision of this service should be brought to light.

As mentioned in the previous section, the lack of funds posed a problem to libraries serving VIPs. This factor could also have hindered libraries from providing this service altogether.

Besides the lack of funds, another factor which could have hindered the provision of library services for VIPs would be presumptions made by the libraries. According to Shellatay and Mariam (1996), "Libraries erroneously believe that it was not justified to allocate enormous funds just to support the information needs of a mere 1% of the

population." There is the presumption that services for VIPs would involve high capital costs. Shellatay and Mariam (1996) mention that this presumption is not entirely true as many assistive equipment and software programmes cost around the same as equipment and software for sighted users. Thus, some libraries may end up not providing services for VIPs based on this presumption. Also, the population of VIPs in Malaysia is more than 1% and stands at about 3.4% or 834,020 Malaysians, as mentioned in the first chapter of this study.

It can be seen that these false presumptions towards VIPs and services for VIPs could be caused by the lack of information and ignorance (Shellatay and Mariam, 1996). Lack of information is another barrier that has greatly hindered the development of library services for VIPs.

Another factor that could have hindered the provision of library services for VIPs among public libraries is that the provision of this service in Malaysia has been left to NGOs (Shellatay and Mariam, 1996).

2.6   Summary

This chapter began by providing an idea of the purpose of the literature review. The approach taken to obtain information for this chapter was also given. The main part of this chapter covered the findings of the literature review.

Two previous studies in the UK which were similar, to a certain extent, to this study were reviewed. Craddock (1985) found that few libraries identified the blind as a target group. Kinnell, Yu and Creaser (2000) found that a significant minority of libraries did

not have a specific policy statement, one third of staff had no basic visual awareness training, and most of the libraries lacked having a specific budget allocation for VIPs. Another study in Argentina, which was not only restricted to library services for VIPs but also for the physically disabled, was also reviewed. Todaro (2005) concluded that the libraries surveyed had many things to improve upon and recommended an integrated library approach.

The literature review conducted covered the 3 research questions of this study. The findings of the literature review concerning the first research question covered the following areas on library materials (including Braille books, talking books and large print books), production of library materials (including the role of volunteers), library equipment (including talking book players and magnifying devices), computer assistive technology (including computers and Internet access, scanners and optical character recognition (OCR) systems, screen readers, Braille translation software, Braille printers, refreshable Braille displays, and reading devices), library services (including the training of staff, postal services, interlibrary loan services, and mobile library services), and the management of library services for VIPs (including policy, budget, relationship with other organizations working with VIPs, library concessions, and library access).

Literature on problems in the provision of library services for VIPs was reviewed. The main problems were the lack of funds, lack of staff and the high reliance on volunteers, lack of awareness among VIPs concerning library services, and problems in getting in touch with potential visually impaired users. No previous literature on the facilitating factors in the provision of library services for VIPs were found. However, three factors were listed by the author. They were directives from the Government, initiative from the library's Director, and request from NGOs. Literature on the factors hindering the

provision of library services for VIPs was also examined. It was found that some of the factors were the lack of funds, and false presumptions towards VIPs and services for VIPs.

The next chapter presents the methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in order to achieve the objectives of this study. The purpose of this study was to obtain information on the current level of provision of library services for visually impaired persons (VIPs) in Malaysia by public libraries and libraries specialising in services for the visually impaired.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current status of the provision of library services for VIPs by public libraries and libraries specialising in library services for VIPs in Malaysia, in terms of the provision of materials, equipments, services, and the management of their libraries?

2. For libraries with provision of library services for VIPs, what are the problems faced by them, and what are the factors that facilitated the provision of this service? and

3. For public libraries without provision of library services for VIPs, what are the factors that hinder them from providing this service?

3.1   Research Method

In choosing the research method that would best fulfil the purpose of this study and answer the research questions most effectively, it is felt that a survey research method would be most appropriate.

From the various types of survey methods, the mail or postal survey would be the main method used. This will be followed by a telephone interview if it is deemed necessary to obtain or clarify information. The reason that a postal survey was chosen was because it was felt that a postal survey provides more time for the respondents to complete the survey. The reason why this is an important factor would be because some of the questions posed in the questionnaire require statistical data which some respondents may have to search for. A postal survey is also cost efficient since the sample of the population was located all around the country.

Besides the survey method, a visit to the MAB library was also conducted to find out more about the provision of library services for VIPs.

3.2   Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed to ensure that the 3 research questions would be answered. The questionnaire was made available in two languages, English (see Appendix A) and Bahasa Melayu (see Appendix B). It is divided into 8 parts (Part A to Part H) and includes 39 questions in total. The formats of the questions are both closed and open-ended, depending on the purpose of the questions.

The topics covered in Part A to Part E of the questionnaire was to a certain extent based on the topics covered in the research conducted by Craddock (1985) and LISU (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000). Part A of the questionnaire relates to library materials in the library's collection which are in an accessible format for VIPs. The accessible format library materials in question are large print books, Braille books, talking books, talking magazines, and talking newspapers. Part B of the questionnaire seeks to find out about the library's production of accessible format library materials. Part C is about library

equipments suitable for VIPs. The list of equipments in Question no. 11 was not based on any particular list from other research. However, the list was compiled based on the overall literature review conducted and it was felt that the equipments listed were the most general that could be available in a library. Part D relates to library services for VIPs. Questions included in this part pertain to the training of staff, the cataloguing of accessible format library materials for VIPs, interlibrary loan services, mobile library services, and postal services. Questions on the provision of library concessions and easy access to building facilities are asked in Part E.

Two parts of the questionnaire, Part F and Part G, were not based on any previous research. This was because there were none found focusing on the problems and facilitating factors in the provision of library services for the VIPs, and the factors that hinder the provision of library services for VIPs.

Part F is to be answered by libraries with provision of library services for VIPs. This part seeks to find out the problems faced by these libraries in their provision of library services for VIPs, and also seeks to find out the factors which facilitated the provision of this service. Part G is to be answered by libraries which do not have provision of library services for VIPs. This part seeks to find out the factors which hinder the provision of this service.

Lastly, Part H includes questions about the library's membership and background.

3.3   Population and sample

The population of this study consists of:

(i)   the public libraries in Malaysia; and

(ii)   the special libraries serving VIPs that are open to the visually impaired public.

In selecting a sample to represent the population of this study, none of the common sampling techniques were used. Instead, the sample chosen to represent the public libraries in Malaysia is the National Library of Malaysia and 15 other public libraries. These 15 other public libraries were listed in the 'Senarai Alamat Perpustakaan Awam 2003 (List of Public Library Addresses 2003)' from the National Library of Malaysia's website (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 2004). This list consists of 15 libraries which are the 15 state public libraries. The list, however, was outdated as some of the contact details were no longer valid. Steps were taken to obtain as much current information as possible by calling the National Library of Malaysia, the Telekom phone directory (103), and calling the respective state libraries to confirm the addresses, contact details, and the current directors' names.

These 15 state public libraries are as follows:

1.   Johor State Public Library Corporation

2.   Kedah State Public Library Corporation

3.   Kelantan State Public Library Corporation

4.   Kuala Lumpur Library

5.   Labuan State Public Library Corporation

6.   Melaka State Public Library Corporation

7.   Negeri Sembilan State Public Library Corporation

8. Pahang State Public Library Corporation

9. Perak State Public Library Corporation

10. Perlis State Public Library Corporation

11. Penang State Public Library Corporation

12. Sabah State Library

13. Sarawak State Library

14. Selangor State Public Library Corporation

15. Terengganu State Public Library Corporation

Even though the Labuan Public Library Corporation is not an official state library as mentioned in Chapter 1, for the purposes of this study, it will be regarded as a state library. Thus the sample will consist of the National Library of Malaysia and the 15 state public libraries.

Selecting the National Library of Malaysia and the 15 state public libraries as the sample for the public library population is justifiable. The 15 state public libraries represent each state they belong to and most of the libraries in each state are under the control and guidance of their state public library.

As for the sample representing the special libraries serving the VIPs, the International Directory of Libraries for the Blind (Nomura and Yamada, 2000) was consulted. Only two libraries were listed in Malaysia, they are the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) Braille Resource Centre and the St. Nicholas Institute for the Visually Handicapped. Due to the small number of libraries, both libraries are included in the sample.

3.4 Pre-testing

The questionnaire was pre-tested to obtain valuable feedback. This was to ensure that any possible problems with regards to wordings, the format of the questionnaire, and the clarity of the questions and instructions will be brought to light and corrected.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on 2 of the 18 sample libraries. The two chosen were the National Library of Malaysia and the Sabah State Library. After the pre-test, some amendments were made before the final questionnaire was sent to all the sample libraries.

3.5 Data Collection

The finalised questionnaire was sent by Pos Laju National Courier to all 18 libraries on the 6th of January 2006. The questionnaires were sent by Pos Laju National Courier due to the small sample and thus to ensure that all the libraries received their questionnaires. Since the Pos Laju National Courier was used, the time frame given to complete the questionnaire was two weeks and the due date given to the libraries to return the answered questionnaire was the 19th of January 2006.

By the due date, only four answered questionnaires were received. Reminders in the form of telephone calls to the libraries were conducted. After numerous reminders, the balance of the 14 questionnaires were all finally returned by the 17th of February 2006. This gives a response rate of 100%.

Most of the libraries had completed the questionnaire satisfactorily. However, telephone interviews and e-mail correspondences had to be conducted on a few libraries to obtain answers for questions which were not answered or were not clearly answered.

Questions asked during the telephone interviews and e-mail correspondences were similar to that of the questions in the questionnaire. Some of the libraries were also asked to explain in greater detail their answers in order for the author to have a clearer picture.

3.6   Data Analysis

After the data was collected, as described in the previous section, the data was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) student edition version 11.0 for Windows. The data was then analysed.

The results and data analysis are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to assess the current level of provision of library services for visually impaired persons (VIPs) in Malaysia by public libraries and libraries specialising in services for the visually impaired.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current status of the provision of library services for VIPs by public libraries and libraries specialising in library services for VIPs in Malaysia, in terms of the provision of materials, equipments, services, and the management of their libraries?

2. For libraries with provision of library services for VIPs, what are the problems faced by them, and what are the factors that facilitated the provision of this service? and

3. For public libraries without provision of library services for VIPs, what are the factors that hinder them from providing this service?

This chapter presents the results obtained from the questionnaires returned, and the analysis of these results. Data was tabulated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) student edition version 11.0 for Windows and the results were analysed. The results and analysis are presented in 8 sections:

(i) library background

(ii) library materials for VIPs

(iii) production of library materials for VIPs

(iv) library equipments for VIPs

(v)   services for VIPs

(vi)   library management

(vii)   provision of library services for VIPs

(viii) non-provision of library services for VIPs.

The first to sixth sections seek to answer the first research question. The seventh section seeks to answer the second research question, and the eighth section seeks to answer the third research question. Although most of the information presented in this chapter is obtained from the questionnaire replies from the sample libraries, some of the information presented is supplemented with information obtained from the librarians of these libraries through phone conversations, e-mail correspondence, and a library visit.

4.1   Library background

The sample of the study consists of 18 libraries, and all 18 libraries responded to the questionnaire. The names of the 18 libraries are given in Table 4.1. The names of the libraries are arranged by category and in alphabetical order.

Table 4.1
List of libraries surveyed

Category	Name of library
Public Libraries	1. National Library of Malaysia (PNM) 2. Johor State Public Library Corporation (Johor) 3. Kedah State Public Library Corporation (Kedah) 4. Kelantan State Public Library Corporation (Kelantan) 5. Kuala Lumpur Library (Kuala Lumpur) 6. Labuan State Public Library Corporation (Labuan) 7. Melaka State Public Library Corporation (Melaka) 8. Negeri Sembilan State Public Library Corporation (Negeri Sembilan) 9. Pahang State Public Library Corporation (Pahang) 10. Penang State Public Library Corporation (Penang) 11. Perak State Public Library Corporation (Perak) 12. Perlis State Public Library Corporation (Perlis) 13. Sabah State Library (Sabah) 14. Sarawak State Library (Sarawak) 15. Selangor State Public Library Corporation (Selangor) 16. Terengganu State Public Library Corporation (Terengganu)
Special Libraries	1. Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) 2. St. Nicholas Institute for the Visually Handicapped (St. Nicholas)

4.1.1 Year established

The libraries were asked to provide the year they were established. All but two of these

libraries were able to provide the year. The two which did not provide the exact year,

only managed to state that they were established in the 1960s. Table 4.2 lists the various

years of establishment from the earliest established library to the most currently

established library.

Table 4.2
Year established

Year established	Names of library	No. of library	Percentage (%)
1881	Melaka	1	5.6
1938	Kelantan	1	5.6
1952	MAB; Negeri Sembilan	2	11.1
1960s	Labuan; St. Nicholas	2	11.1
1969	Perlis	1	5.6
1971	PNM; Selangor	2	11.1
1972	Penang; Sabah	2	11.1
1973	Pahang	1	5.6
1974	Kedah	1	5.6
1979	Terengganu	1	5.6
1980	Perak	1	5.6
1984	Johor	1	5.6
1989	Kuala Lumpur	1	5.6
2000	Sarawak	1	5.6
Total		18	100.0

From the above table, it can be seen that most (94.4%) of the libraries have been established for more than 15 years (1989 or before).

4.1.2   Library membership

The libraries were required in 3 separate questions in the questionnaire to provide data on the total library membership, total number of disabled members, and total number of visually impaired members. The purpose of these 3 questions was to find out if the libraries were able to provide this data as membership details are important statistics for decision making within the organisation. A library would be able to better serve VIPs if they knew how many VIPs they were currently serving.

The libraries were required to provide the statistics of the total members as at 31st December 2004. All 18 (100%) libraries had no problems in providing data on the total number of registered library members. One library did not provide the total figure as it had moved to a new premises and required that all previous members to register again to be considered as members. However, this will not have a grave effect on the results

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of this section as the main purpose is to find out if the libraries had statistics on the total member, total disabled members, and total visually impaired members. The results obtained showed that the total members in each library ranged from 250 to 740,349 with the special libraries at the bottom of the range followed by the public libraries. The average number of total members for each library is 133,501.

As for the number of registered library members who are disabled, only 3 libraries (16.7%) were able to provide this figure. The 3 libraries consist of 1 public library (Sarawak), and 2 special libraries (MAB and St. Nicholas). The number of disabled members provided by the 3 libraries ranged from 107 to 258. For the other 15 libraries (83.3%), statistics of the number of disabled members were not available.

Three libraries (16.7%) also managed to provide the number of registered library members who are visually impaired. The 3 libraries consist of 1 public library (Sabah), and 2 special libraries (MAB and St. Nicholas). The number of visually impaired members provided by the 3 libraries ranged from 130 to 258. For 15 (83.33%) of the libraries, these statistics was not available.

It is interesting to note that Sarawak was able to provide the membership statistics of its disabled members but were unable to provide the membership statistics of visually impaired members. It would be better if Sarawak was able to obtain the statistics of their disabled members based on the type of disability, e.g. visually impaired, hearing impaired, etc. Sabah, on the other hand, was able to provide statistics of their visually impaired members but was unable to provide the total number of disabled members.

4.1.3 Sources of funds

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the National Library of Malaysia obtains its funds from the Federal Government. The state public libraries, obtain their funds from both the State Government and the Federal Government. The results of the survey were in line with this. From the results of the survey, it is also noted that the National Library of Malaysia also obtains some funds from the sale of its published materials.

As for the special libraries, it was found that their main source of funds was donations from the public.

According to MAB, their Vocational Training Centre is highly subsidised by the Government. However, their library was not given any form of government subsidy. Thus, their main source of funds was from public donations obtained through fund raising.

4.2 Library materials for VIPs

Part A of the questionnaire was concerned with the provision of accessible format library materials for VIPs. The libraries were asked about the provision of the following accessible format materials:

(i)   large print books

(ii)   Braille books

(iii)   talking books

(iv)   talking magazines

(v)   talking newspapers

4.2.1 Large print books

Large print books can be a very useful library material for people with low vision. However, this does not mean that large print books are only meant for the low vision. Many libraries provide large print books that are not specifically for people with visual impairment. Thus, the provision of large print books alone does not indicate the provision of library services for VIPs.

A total of 7 libraries (38.9%) provided large print books, and 11 (61.1%) did not provide them. Of the 7 libraries which provided large print books, 6 were public libraries and 1 was a special library. The breakdown of provision by library categories is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Number of libraries providing large print books

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	6	37.5	1	50	7	38.9
Do not provide	10	62.5	1	50	11	61.1
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

The 7 libraries which provided large print books in their book collection were Negeri Sembilan, Penang, Perak, Perlis, Sabah, Terengganu, and MAB.

The total number of large print book titles available at the 7 libraries was 1653 titles. Figure 4.1 provides the number of large print titles available at the 7 libraries, of which 96% of the total number of large print titles was provided by public libraries.
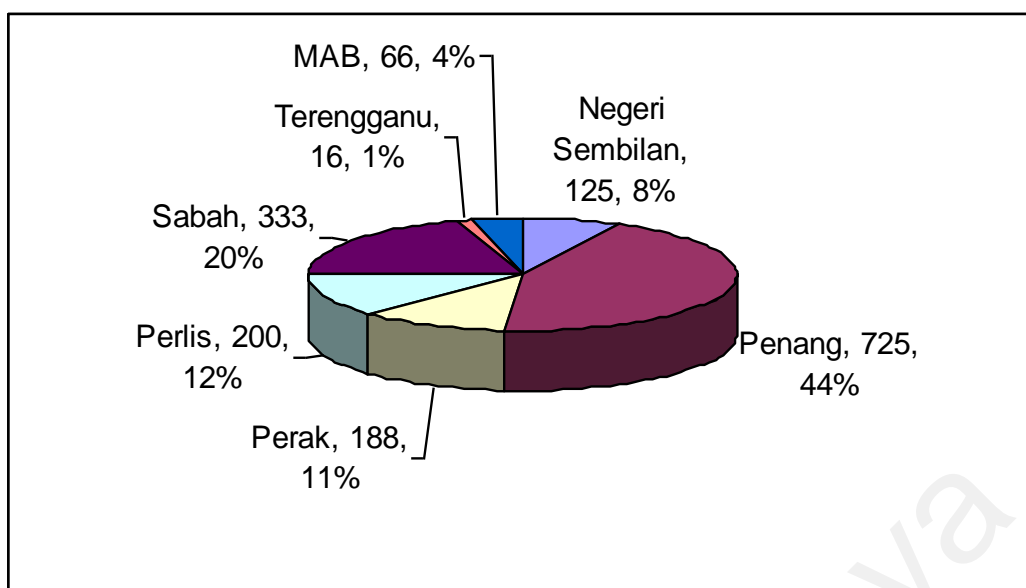
Figure 4.1
Number of large print titles provided by each library

4.2.2 Braille books

The libraries surveyed were asked whether they provided Braille books in their

collection. The results found that Braille books were provided by 5 (27.8%) of the

libraries surveyed. The results are shown in Table 4.4. The libraries which provided the

Braille books were the two special libraries (MAB and St. Nicholas) and 3 state public

libraries (Penang, Sabah and Selangor).

Table 4.4
Number of libraries providing Braille books

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	3	18.75	2	100	5	27.8
Do not provide	13	81.25	0	0	13	72.2
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

The libraries were also requested to give the number of titles available in their

collection. A total of 3383 Braille books were provided by the 5 libraries. St. Nicholas'

collection made up 48% of the total Braille books available in public or special libraries

in Malaysia, followed by MAB at 32%. This shows that in terms of the quantity of

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Braille books available in libraries, 80% of the Braille books provided by libraries in this country were provided by the special libraries. The balance 20% of Braille books were provided by the 3 public libraries (Penang – 8%, Sabah – 7%, and Selangor – 5%). Figure 4.2 shows the number of Braille books provided by the 5 libraries.
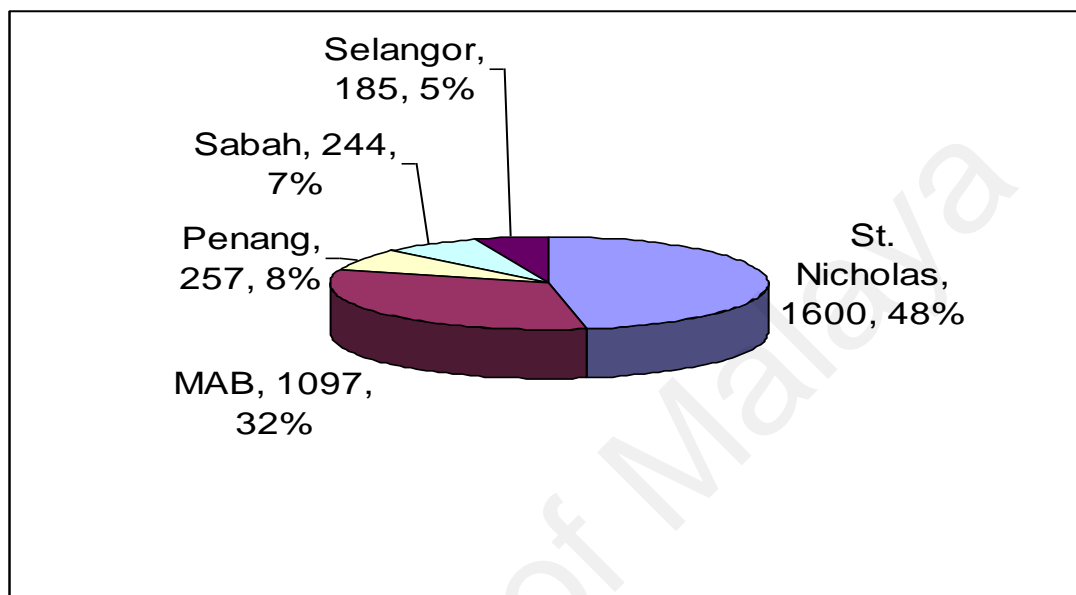
Figure 4.2
Number of Braille titles provided by each library

4.2.3 Talking books

The 18 libraries were asked concerning the provision of talking books. Table 4.5 shows the responses obtained. Seven (38.9%) of the libraries reported that they provided talking books for VIPs. These 7 libraries consist of 5 public libraries and 2 special libraries. The 7 libraries were Labuan, Penang, Perlis, Sabah, Selangor, MAB, and St. Nicholas.

Table 4.5
Number of libraries providing talking books

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	5	31.25	2	100	7	38.9
Do not provide	11	68.75	0	0	11	61.1
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

The 7 libraries which provided talking books were subsequently asked which formats of talking books were provided by them. The questionnaire gave the libraries 3 answer options: 'Audio cassettes', 'CDs' (compact disc), and 'Other format(s)'. Each library may select 1 or more formats depending on how many formats they were providing. Table 4.6 shows the formats that were provided and the number of titles in each format available in the 7 libraries.

Table 4.6
Number of talking book titles by format

Libraries	Audio cassette		CD		Other	
	No. of titles	Percentage (%)	No. of titles	Percentage (%)	No. of titles	Percentage (%)
Labuan	0	0	70	47.30	0	0
Penang	9	0.23	0	0	0	0
Perlis	53	1.37	23	15.54	0	0
Sabah	1056	27.27	36	24.32	0	0
Selangor	10	0.26	0	0	0	0
MAB	1544	39.88	19	12.84	0	0
St. Nicholas	1200	30.99	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	3872	100	148	100	0	0

It was found that in terms of the quantity of audio cassette talking books available in libraries, there were 3872 audio cassette talking books in total. Table 4.6 shows that nearly three quarters of the audio cassette talking books were provided by the 2 special libraries. MAB provided the highest number of audio cassette talking books with 1544 (39.88%). This was followed by St. Nicholas with 1200 (30.99%). Sabah was not far behind with 1056 (27.27%).

A total of 148 talking books in CD format were provided by the libraries surveyed. Table 4.6 shows that Labuan provided the most number of CD talking books with 70 talking books (47.3%). This was followed by Sabah (24.32%), and Perlis (15.54%). MAB provided 12.84% of the total talking books.

None of the libraries provided talking books in other formats besides audio cassettes and CDs.

In total, there were 4,020 talking books provided in audio cassette and CD formats. 68.7% were provided by special libraries and 31.3% were provided by public libraries.

The libraries were also asked if they were using DAISY technology for their talking books. The results show that Sabah and MAB used this technology for their talking books.

4.2.4 Talking magazines

Only 1 (5.6%) of the 18 libraries provided its users with talking magazines. The talking magazines provided by St. Nicholas were both in audio cassette and CD formats. The talking magazine titles provided include 'Utusan Konsumer' and 'Computimes'. Table 4.7 shows the number of libraries providing talking magazines. Since only 1 special library provided this material, then the breakdown of figures between public libraries and special libraries was not shown in the table.

Table 4.7
Number of libraries providing talking magazines

	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	1	5.6
Do not provide	17	94.4
Total	18	100

4.2.5 Talking newspapers

Again only 1 library provided talking newspapers as seen in Table 4.8. St. Nicholas provided talking newspapers and the talking newspapers were in both audio cassette and CD formats. The title of the talking newspaper provided was 'Newscast'.

Table 4.8
Number of libraries providing talking newspapers

	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	1	5.6
Do not provide	17	94.4
Total	18	100

From the results, it can be seen that the majority of large print titles are provided by public libraries, whereas, the majority of Braille and talking books are provided by special libraries. Talking magazines and talking newspapers are not provided by any public library, however, they are provided by a special library. It can be inferred that most of the library materials for VIPs in this country are provided by special libraries since the provision of large print titles by public libraries do not indicate the specific provision for VIPs.

4.3   Production of library materials for VIPs

Part B of the questionnaire sought to find out about the production of accessible format library materials for VIPs among the libraries surveyed. The libraries were asked whether they produced any of the accessible format library materials for VIPs. Five libraries (27.8%) reported that they did. These 5 libraries were Penang, Sabah, Sarawak, MAB, and St. Nicholas. Table 4.9 shows the number of libraries which produced accessible format library materials for VIPs.

Table 4.9
Number of libraries producing accessible format library materials

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Produce	3	18.75	2	100	5	27.8
Do not produce	13	81.25	0	0	13	72.2
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

It was noted from Section 4.2 that 4 libraries, and not 5 libraries had accessible format library materials available in their libraries for VIPs. Sarawak did not state any collection of accessible format library materials for VIPs in its collection. An e-mail correspondence with the Librarian clarified the matter. The Librarian stated that their library produced Braille books and talking books on demand. Users have requested that the library produce part of books or study notes, and once produced, these materials are given to the user requesting for the materials. Since there has never been a request to produce whole books, none have been produced and none have been kept as part of the library's collection.

4.3.1 Library materials produced

The libraries which produced accessible format library materials for VIPs were asked which types of materials they produced. The results are given in the Table 4.10. The table shows that all 5 libraries produced Braille materials. Four libraries (80%), out of the 5 libraries which produced library materials, produced talking books. Only 1 library produced talking magazines and talking newspapers.

Table 4.10
Types of accessible format library materials produced

Library	Braille	Talking books	Talking magazines	Talking newspapers	Others
Penang	✓	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sabah	✓	✓	☐	☐	✓
Sarawak	✓	✓	☐	☐	☐
MAB	✓	✓	☐	☐	✓
St. Nicholas	✓	✓	✓	✓	☐

Besides the production of Braille books, talking books, talking magazines, and talking newspapers, 2 libraries mentioned that they also produced other materials. Sabah produced tactile books, which are tactile graphic books made out of recycled materials

such as unused buttons, strips of cloth, toothpaste boxes, etc. These tactile books are in Braille and in print format to enable the sighted to read the books together with their blind children. MAB stated that besides the production of Braille books and talking books, they also produced large print materials on request.

4.3.2   Role of volunteers

This questionnaire also sought to find out the role that volunteers played in the production of accessible format library materials for VIPs. The 5 libraries which produced accessible format library materials for VIPs were asked if they relied on volunteers to assist them in any part of the production process. The following table shows that 80% of the libraries which produced accessible format library materials reported that they relied on volunteers. The only library that had not relied on volunteers was Penang.

Table 4.11
Number of libraries that rely on volunteers

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Rely on volunteers	2	66.67	2	100	4	80
Do not rely on volunteers	1	33.33	0	0	1	20
Total	3	100	2	100	5	100

The 4 libraries which relied on volunteers were asked to state the functions performed by the volunteers. The various functions mentioned are listed below:

(i) Reading books using DAISY technology;

(ii) Helping in reading and recording;

(iii) Transcribe from print to MS Word files; and proofreading the Braille files; and

(iv) Reading for recording; and typing for brailling.

The 2 main functions of the volunteers can be summarised as reading for the production of talking books, and typing for Braille production.

4.3.3 Reasons for production of accessible format library materials

Various reasons were given by the 5 libraries on why they were producing accessible format library materials for VIPs. The reasons provided are listed as follows (in no particular order):

- To meet the needs of visually impaired users;

- To increase the library's collection.;

- To supply materials when demanded so as to optimise resources;

- To provide reference materials for tertiary students, exam papers for blind civil servants, documents for meetings and conferences, and manuals for employees and users;

- These materials are not available in accessible formats and VIPs demand these materials at affordable rates.

Although it is not easy to generalise or summarise the reasons given by the libraries, it may be said that the libraries see the need to better provide for the various needs and demands of VIPs by producing their own materials.

4.4 Library equipments for VIPs

The libraries surveyed were asked to list the quantity of library equipments that were:

- (i) available for VIPs to use within the library premises; and

- (ii) available to be loaned to visually impaired users.

4.4.1 Library equipment available for use within the library premises

In Question 11 of the questionnaire, 14 different types of assistive library equipments for VIPs were listed. The libraries were asked to fill in the quantity of these equipment which were available for use within their library premises. These 14 equipments can be categorised under 3 categories, namely talking book players, magnifying devices, and Computer Assistive Technology.

4.4.1.1 Talking book players

The libraries were asked to provide the quantity of audio cassette players and CD players that were available for VIPs to use within library premises.

<u>Audio cassette players</u>

Table 4.12 shows that overall, 6 (33.3%) of the libraries provided audio cassette players to be used within library premises by VIPs. Five of the libraries were public libraries and 1 was a special library. The libraries that provided these audio cassette players were Penang, Perlis, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, and St. Nicholas.

Table 4.12
Number of libraries providing audio cassette players for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	5	31.25	1	50	6	33.3
Do not provide	11	68.75	1	50	12	66.7
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

Table 4.13 shows the quantity of audio cassette players available in each library. A total of 30 audio cassette players were provided by the 6 libraries. Sabah provided the most number of audio cassette players, numbering at 11 or 36.67%.

Table 4.13
Number of audio cassette players provided by libraries for VIPs to use within library premises

Library	No. of players	Percentage (%)
Sabah	11	36.67
Selangor	8	26.67
Penang	3	10
Perlis	3	10
St. Nicholas	3	10
Sarawak	2	6.67
Total	30	100

CD players

Four (22.2%) of the total libraries surveyed provided CD players to be used within library premises for VIPs. Table 4.14 shows that all 4 libraries were public libraries. These 4 libraries were Perlis, Sabah, Sarawak, and Selangor.

Table 4.14
Number of libraries providing CD players for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	4	25	0	0	4	22.2
Do not provide	12	75	2	100	14	77.8
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

Table 4.15 lists the number of CD players available in each library. A total of 16 CD players were provided by the 4 libraries. Again, Sabah provided the highest quantity of 11 (68.75%) CD players. This was followed by Perlis and Sarawak with 2 units each, while Selangor provided 1 unit.

Table 4.15
Number of CD players provided by libraries for VIPs to use within library premises

Library	No. of players	Percentage (%)
Sabah	11	68.75
Perlis	2	12.5
Sarawak	2	12.5
Selangor	1	6.25

Total	16	100

4.4.1.2 Magnifying devices

The magnifying devices included in this study were magnifiers, magnifying lamps, screen magnifiers, and CCTVs. The libraries were asked to indicate the number of magnifying devices that were available for use within their library premises by VIPs.

Magnifiers

Magnifiers were not provided by any of the libraries surveyed.

Magnifying lamps

Magnifying lamps were not provided by any of the libraries surveyed.

Screen magnifiers

Table 4.16 shows that screen magnifiers were provided by 3 public libraries or 16.7% of the total libraries surveyed. The libraries were Labuan, Sabah, and Sarawak. Each of these libraries provided 1 screen magnifier to be used within their library premises. None of the special libraries provided screen magnifiers.

Table 4.16
Number of libraries providing screen magnifiers for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	3	18.75	0	0	3	16.7
Do not provide	13	81.25	2	100	15	83.3
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

Closed-Circuit Television Systems (CCTVs)

The next table shows that Closed-Circuit Television Systems (CCTVs) were provided for visually impaired users in 1 (5.6%) of the libraries. Sabah provided 1 unit of CCTV.

Table 4.17
Number of libraries providing CCTVs for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	1	6.25	0	0	1	5.6
Do not provide	15	93.75	2	100	17	94.4
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

4.4.1.3 Computer Assistive Technology

The rest of the 8 types of equipment were categorised under Computer Assistive

Technology. These equipments were computers with Internet access suitable for VIPs,

scanners, screen readers, Braille translation software, Braille printer/embosser,

refreshable Braille display, and reading devices including Kurzweil and Optacon.

Computers with Internet access

The results show that 77.8% of the libraries surveyed did not provide any computers

with Internet access to be used by VIPs. Only 4 libraries (Penang, Sabah, Sarawak, and

MAB) provided this equipment. The breakdown of provision by public libraries and

special libraries can be seen in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18
Number of libraries providing computers with Internet access for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	3	18.75	1	50	4	22.2
Do not provide	13	81.25	1	50	14	77.8
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

A total of 12 computers with Internet access were provided by the 4 libraries. MAB

provided the most number of computers with Internet access, numbering at 5. This was

followed by Sarawak with 3, and finally Penang and Sabah, each provided 2 computers with Internet access.

<u>Scanner</u>

Five libraries or 27.8% of the total libraries surveyed provided scanners. Table 4.19 gives the breakdown of provision by library category.

Table 4.19
Number of libraries providing scanners for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	4	25	1	50	5	27.8
Do not provide	12	75	1	50	13	72.2
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

A total of 8 scanners were provided by the 5 libraries. Of these 5 libraries, 2 libraries (Sarawak, and Selangor) provided 1 scanner each. The other 3 libraries (Kedah, Negeri Sembilan, and MAB) provided 2 scanners each.

<u>Screen reader</u>

Screen readers were provided by 4 libraries or 22.2% of the libraries surveyed. Three or 18.75% of public libraries, and 1 or 50% of special libraries provided screen readers to be used by VIPs within their library premises. The results are shown in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20
Number of libraries providing screen readers for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	3	18.75	1	50	4	22.2
Do not provide	13	81.25	1	50	14	77.8
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

A total number of 8 screen readers were provided by the 4 libraries. MAB provided the highest number of screen readers with 5 units. Penang, Sabah, and Sarawak provided 1 unit each.

Braille translation software

As seen in Table 4.21, Braille translation software was provided by 4 libraries (22.2%). Three or 18.75% of public libraries and 1 or 50% of special libraries provided this software for VIPs.

Table 4.21
Number of libraries providing Braille translation software for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	3	18.75	1	50	4	22.2
Do not provide	13	81.25	1	50	14	77.8
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

A total of 8 Braille translation software were being provided by the 4 libraries. Again, MAB had the highest number of provision with 5 units. Penang, Sabah, and Sarawak provided 1 unit each.

Braille printer

Table 4.22 shows that Braille printers or embossers were being provided by 4 (22.2%) of the libraries. Three of the libraries were public libraries and 1 was a special library.

Table 4.22
Number of libraries providing Braille printers for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	3	18.75	1	50	4	22.2
Do not provide	13	81.25	1	50	14	77.8
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

A total of 5 Braille printers were provided by the 4 libraries. The number of Braille printers that were provided was 2 printers in Sabah, and 1 printer each in Penang, Sarawak, and MAB.

Refreshable Braille display

MAB was the only library from the 18 libraries surveyed that provided refreshable Braille display. This means only 5.6% of the libraries had provision for this equipment. MAB provided 1 quantity of the equipment.

Reading devices

None of the libraries provided the Kurzweil and Optacon reading devices.

4.4.1.4 Other equipments

The libraries were also asked to state any other equipments (besides the 14 listed in the questionnaire) that were being provided by their libraries to be used within library premises by VIPs. Four (22.2%) of the libraries surveyed stated that besides the 14 equipments listed, there were also other equipments which they provided for VIPs to use within the library premises. Table 4.23 shows the results in further detail.

Table 4.23
Number of libraries providing other equipments for VIPs to use within library premises

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	2	12.5	2	100	4	22.2
Do not provide	14	87.5	0	0	14	77.8
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

All the 4 libraries provided Braille typewriters. A total of 6 Braille typewriters were being provided by the 4 libraries. Selangor and MAB provided 2 Braille typewriters each, and Sabah and St. Nicholas provided 1 each.

Besides Braille typewriters, MAB also provided 1 scientific calculator and 3 BrailleNotes (which are computers with Braille keyboards).

Overall it was found that the level of provision of library equipment for VIPs was low as for each type of the library equipment provided, none was provided by more than one third of the libraries.

4.4.2   Library equipments for loan

The libraries were required in Question 12 to indicate the quantity of equipments that were provided to be loaned to VIPs. The equipments were audio cassette players and CD players. The libraries were also given the option of listing any other equipment which was available for loan to VIPs besides the audio cassette players and the CD players.

<u>Audio cassette players</u>

94.4% or 17 of the libraries surveyed had not provided any cassette players for loan to VIPs. Only 5.6% or 1 library (Sabah) provided this equipment for loan. Sabah provided 50 units of cassette players to be loaned to VIPs.

<u>CD players</u>

As for the provision of CD players for loan to VIPs, none of the libraries provided this equipment for loan to VIPs.

Other equipment

Besides the audio cassette player and the CD player, the libraries were also asked to state if they had provided any other equipment for loan to VIPs. Only 1 (5.6%) of the libraries mentioned that they provided another type of equipment for loan. St. Nicholas provided a Brailler for loan to VIPs. A Brailler is a Braille typewriter.

From the answers provided for this question, it was found that only 2 libraries provided library equipment for loan to VIPs. Sabah showed good effort in providing 50 audio cassette players for loan to VIPs.

4.5 Services for VIPs

The libraries were asked to provide information on library services such as the training of staff to provide services for VIPs, cataloguing of library materials for VIPs, interlibrary loan services, mobile library loan services, and postal services.

4.5.1 Staff training

The libraries were asked whether their staff were given any form of training with reference to the provision of library services for VIPs. Table 4.24 shows that 5 (27.8%) of the libraries had their staff provided with training. The libraries were Penang, Sabah, Sarawak, MAB, and St. Nicholas.

Table 4.24
Number of libraries with staff provided with training

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	3	18.75	2	100	5	27.8
Do not provide	13	81.25	0	0	13	72.2
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

The libraries which had their staff trained were then asked what types of training their staff were provided with. The responses of the 5 libraries are as follows (in no particular order):

- Basic training in computerised Braille translation and in using the Duxbury Braille Translator;

- Training in the use of My Studio Pro-DAISY talking book, training in the production of Braille books using computer, and training in the production of tactile books;

- Training in the computerised Braille production system and usage of various software;

- Training in Braille translation and embossing, training in the usage of screen readers and scanning software, and training in the usage of DAISY software; and

- Staff given training at the DAISY production workshop and computerised Braille production workshop.

From the answers provided by the 5 libraries, it can be inferred that the training which the staff were provided with were mainly on the production of materials and the use of assistive equipment. No training were provided on basic visual awareness or on how to serve visually impaired users.

The libraries with trained staff were required to state the percentage of staff which was provided with training. Two of the state libraries had 10% or less of their staff trained in the provision of library services for VIPs. One of the state libraries was unable to provide a figure. Not surprisingly, the 2 special libraries had the highest level of staff

with training, 1 special library with 80% and the other 100%. The results are shown in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25
Percentage of staff with training

Percentage of staff with training	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
10% or less	2	40
11% - 20%	0	0
21% - 30%	0	0
31% - 40%	0	0
41% - 50%	0	0
51% - 60%	0	0
61% - 70%	0	0
71% - 80%	1	20
81% - 90%	0	0
91% - 100%	1	20
No answer	1	20
TOTAL	5	100

4.5.2   Cataloguing of library materials

The questionnaire also addressed the cataloguing of library materials for VIPs. From Table 4.26, it can be seen that 33.3% or 6 of the libraries surveyed had catalogued library materials for VIPs. The 6 libraries were Penang, Perlis, Sabah, Selangor, MAB, and St. Nicholas.

Table 4.26
Number of libraries that catalogue library materials for VIPs

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Catalogue	4	25	2	100	6	33.3
Do not catalogue	12	75	0	0	12	66.7
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

The results provided in Section 4.2.2 showed that 5 libraries (Penang, Sabah, Selangor, MAB and St. Nicholas) had provision of Braille books in their library. It was found that all of these 5 libraries catalogue their library materials for VIPs. As for talking books, talking newspapers and talking magazines, Sections 4.2.3 to 4.2.5 showed that 7 libraries (Labuan, Penang, Perlis, Sabah, Selangor, MAB, and St. Nicholas) had provision of one or more of these materials. It was found that all 7 libraries except for Labuan had catalogued their library materials for VIPs.

This showed that the majority 6 out of the 7 libraries with provision of library materials for VIPs in this country had not neglected cataloguing these materials.

4.5.3 Interlibrary loan services

The libraries were asked about the provision of interlibrary loan services. The results are shown in Table 4.27. A total of 77.8% of the libraries reported that they provided this service. The 14 libraries which provided this service were the National Library of Malaysia, Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Penang, Perak, Perlis, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, and Terengganu. The libraries which had not provided any interlibrary loan services were Labuan, Malacca, MAB, and St. Nicholas.

Table 4.27
Number of libraries providing interlibrary loan services

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	14	87.5	0	0	14	77.8
Do not provide	2	12.5	2	100	4	22.2
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

These 14 libraries which provided interlibrary loan services were then asked if they had provided this service for materials suitable for VIPs. Table 4.28 shows that only 4 (28.6%) out of the 14 libraries provided interlibrary loan services for materials suitable for VIPs. The 4 libraries were Kelantan, Penang, Sabah, and Selangor. It was found that

71.4% of the libraries with interlibrary loan services did not provide this service for VIPs.

Table 4.28
Number of libraries providing interlibrary loan services for materials suitable for VIPs

	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	4	28.6
Do not provide	10	71.4
Total	14	100

The results show that even though a significant percentage of libraries provided interlibrary loan services, the majority of the libraries provided this service only for materials suitable for their sighted users and did not extend their services for materials suitable for VIPs.

4.5.4   Mobile library services

The libraries were asked about the provision of mobile library services. The results of this question can be seen in Table 4.29. Thirteen (72.2%) of the libraries provided this service. The 13 libraries were Kedah, Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Penang, Perak, Perlis, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, and Terengganu.

Table 4.29
Number of libraries providing mobile library services

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	13	81.25	0	0	13	72.2
Do not provide	3	18.75	2	100	5	27.8

Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

These 13 libraries were then asked concerning the provision of library materials suitable for VIPs through the use of their mobile library service. Table 4.30 shows that out of the 13 libraries which provided mobile library services, only 1 library (Penang) provided mobile library service with library materials that were suitable for VIPs.

Table 4.30
Number of libraries providing mobile library services with materials suitable for VIPs

	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	1	7.7
Do not provide	12	92.3
Total	13	100

The results show that most of the libraries with mobile library services did not make use of this service to provide library materials for VIPs.

4.5.5   Postal services

The libraries surveyed were asked whether they sent library materials to VIPs by using the postal services. Table 4.31 shows that 16.7% or 3 of the libraries provided this service. The 3 libraries which provided this service were Sabah, MAB, and St. Nicholas.

Table 4.31
Number of libraries providing postal services for VIPs

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	1	6.25	2	100	3	16.7
Do not provide	15	93.75	0	0	15	83.3
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

These 3 libraries were then requested to state which library materials were provided by their library through the postal service. Table 4.32 shows the materials provided to VIPs by each library using the postal service. All 3 libraries provided talking books using the postal service. MAB and St. Nicholas posted Braille books. Only St. Nicholas posted talking magazines and talking newspapers. None of the libraries posted large print books or any other library materials.

Table 4.32
Library materials delivered using postal service

Library	Large Print	Braille	Talking books	Talking magazines	Talking newspapers
Sabah	☐	☐	✓	☐	☐
MAB	☐	✓	✓	☐	☐
St. Nicholas	☐	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.5.5.1 The provision of postal services among libraries with provision of accessible format library materials for VIPs

A cross tabulation was conducted to find out about the provision of postal services among libraries with provision of the various accessible format materials for VIPs.

Table 4.33
Number of libraries which provide library materials and provide postal services for VIPs

	Large Print	Braille books	Talking books	Talking magazines	Talking newspapers
No. of libraries providing library materials	7	5	7	1	1
No. of libraries providing postal services	0	2	3	1	1
% of library which provide postal services for the library materials they provide	0	40	43	100	100

Table 4.33 shows that for large print materials, 7 libraries had provided this material but none provided postal services for this material. For Braille books, 5 libraries provided Braille books in their library and only 2 (40%) of them provided postal services for this material. As for talking books, 7 libraries provided talking books but only 3 (43%) of them provided postal services for the talking books. For talking magazines and talking newspapers, the library which provided these materials also provided postal services for them.

It can be inferred that even though the postal service is provided free for VIPs, this service has not been fully utilised by all the libraries with provision of library materials for VIPs.

4.6 Library management

The management of a library is important to ensure that library services are provided in the most effective manner. This section refers to library management with reference to the provision of library services for VIPs.

4.6.1 Specific budget allocation

The questionnaire had addressed the issue of libraries having a specific budget allocation for the provision of library services for VIPs. Three libraries or 16.7% of the libraries surveyed confirmed they had a specific budget allocation for library services for VIPs. The libraries were Sabah, MAB, and St. Nicholas. This shows that both special libraries and only 1 public library have a specific budget allocation. The results of this question can be seen in Table 4.34.

Table 4.34
Number of libraries having a specific budget allocation for services for VIPs

	Public Libraries	Special Libraries	Total Libraries

	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Specific budget allocation	1	6.25	2	100	3	16.7
No specific budget allocation	15	93.75	0	0	15	83.3
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

The 3 libraries were asked to state the percentage of specific budget allocation over the total budget amount for their library. Only St. Nicholas was able to give an answer that they have a specific budget allocation of approximately 10% of the total budget received for its institution. MAB did not give any response. Sabah mentions that their budget for library services for VIPs was incorporated into their Hypermedia budget.

4.6.1.1 Comparison between libraries with a specific budget allocation and libraries without a specific budget allocation

A cross tabulation was conducted to find out if there were any positive effects of having a specific budget allocation as opposed to not having a specific budget allocation. A comparison was made between:

- libraries with provision of library services for VIPs which have a specific budget allocation; and

- libraries with provision of library services for VIPs which do not have a specific budget allocation

The libraries which were analysed only included the libraries with provision of library services for VIPs. Eight libraries have been identified in Section 4.7 (further along this chapter) as providing library services for VIPs. These 8 libraries were Labuan, Penang, Perlis, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, MAB, and St. Nicholas. As for libraries with a specific budget allocation, the results presented in Section 4.6.1 have shown that there

were 3 libraries. These 3 libraries (i.e. Sabah, MAB, and St. Nicholas) were among the 8 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs.

Provision of materials, equipments, and services

Table 4.35 shows the number of types of materials, equipments, and services provided by libraries with provision of library services for VIPs. The table also gives the mean of the number of types of materials, equipments, and services provided by libraries with specific budget allocation and libraries without specific budget allocation.

Table 4.35
Number of types of materials, equipments, and services provided by libraries with provision of library services for VIPs

Libraries with provision of library services for VIPs and:	Number of types of:			
	Materials	Equipment	Equipment for loan	Services
With a specific budget allocation:				
Sabah	3	9	1	4
MAB	3	8	0	3
St. Nicholas	4	2	1	3
Mean / Average	**3.33**	**6.33**	**0.67**	**3.33**
Without a specific budget allocation:				
Labuan	1	1	0	0
Penang	3	6	0	4
Perlis	2	2	0	1
Sarawak	0	9	0	1
Selangor	2	3	0	2
Mean / Average	**1.6**	**4.2**	**0**	**1.6**

The results showed that even though all 8 libraries have some level of provision for VIPs, the level varies. Libraries with specific budget allocation for VIPs had an average of 3.33 types of materials provided. The libraries without specific budget allocation for VIPs only had a mean of 1.6. This is less than half of the mean for libraries with

specific budget allocation. As for the number of types of equipments provided for VIPs to use within the library premises, the mean for libraries with specific budget allocation was 6.33. Whereas, the mean for libraries without a specific budget allocation for VIPs was 4.2. In terms of the number of types of equipments provided for loan to VIPs, the mean for libraries with specific budget allocation for VIPs was 0.67. The mean for libraries without specific budget allocation for VIPs was 0 as none of the libraries provide any equipment for loan. And finally, for the number of types of services provided for VIPs, the libraries with specific budget allocation for VIPs scored an average of 3.33 types of services. As for libraries without a specific budget allocation for VIPs, they only provided an average of 1.6 types of services.

The above results showed that libraries with a specific budget allocation for VIPs had provided on average more types of materials, equipments (for use within library premises and for loan), and services compared to libraries without a specific budget allocation for VIPs. This cross tabulation did not take into account the quantity of materials and equipments provided.

4.6.2 Guidelines / policies for library services for VIPs

Table 4.36 shows that only 1 library (Sabah) provided guidelines or policies for library services for VIPs. Sabah stated that their guidelines/policies for library services for VIPs was incorporated in the policies and procedures for their Hypermedia section.

Table 4.36
Number of libraries with guidelines or policies for service for VIPs

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
With guidelines	1	6.25	0	0	1	5.6
Without guidelines	15	93.75	2	100	17	94.4

Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

The results show that most libraries, even the ones with provision of library services for VIPs, did not have any guidelines or policies for library services for VIPs.

4.6.3   On-going co-operation

The libraries were asked if they had any on-going co-operation with other organisations serving VIPs. Table 4.37 shows that 38.9% did have an on-going co-operation with other organisations serving VIPs. The libraries with on-going co-operation were Negeri Sembilan, Penang, Perlis, Sabah, Sarawak, MAB, and St. Nicholas.

Table 4.37
Number of libraries with on-going co-operation with other organisations serving VIPs

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
With on-going co-operation	5	31.25	2	100	7	38.9
Without on-going co-operation	11	68.75	0	0	11	61.1
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

In this area of on-going co-operation, the questionnaire also sought to find out what types of organisations had there been on-going co-operations with and what were the main areas of co-operation. Two of the state libraries mentioned on-going co-operation with the Department of Social Welfare. Their main area of co-operation involved organising reading campaigns and other activities such as storytelling sessions for children who were disabled including the visually impaired. The other 3 state libraries listed various organisations and various areas of co-operation. The names of the organisations are listed below and the main areas of co-operation are given in brackets.

- Sabah Society for the Blind (training, resource and equipment sharing)
- Special Schools for the disabled (conducting activities)

- Yayasan Salam (provision of volunteers)

- Malaysian Association for the Blind (systems support)

- St. Nicholas (union catalogue)

As for the 2 special libraries, both mentioned on-going co-operations with the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM). One of the special library mentioned that their main area of co-operation is in the production of story books for school children. The other special library stated the following areas of co-operation: DAISY production, Braille textbook production, and union cataloguing.

Thus, it can be inferred that the libraries have co-operation with organisations which can be categorised as societies or associations for the blind, schools or institutions for the blind, Department of Social Welfare, and voluntary organisations.

4.6.4   Access to building facilities

The libraries were asked concerning efforts made to provide easy access of its building facilities for VIPs. As seen in Table 4.38, 33.3% replied that they had made efforts. The libraries that had made efforts were Kuala Lumpur, Sabah, Sarawak, Terengganu, MAB, and St. Nicholas. Johor did not provide any response to this question but states that they have ceased their central library services since the end of 2003 as the old building which housed the library was no longer safe for use. The new library building was under construction.

Table 4.38
Number of libraries providing easy access to building facilities

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	4	25	2	100	6	33.3
Do not provide	11	68.75	0	0	11	61.1

No response	1	6.25	0	0	1	5.6
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

For the 6 libraries which provided easy access, they were required by the question to specify in what ways was easy access to their building facilities provided. Two of the 6 libraries did not give specific details, and gave general statements that their libraries were designed to accommodate the needs of the disabled including VIPs. Two of the state libraries mentioned that they provided lift buttons in Braille. MAB stated that they provided: (i) lift buttons in Braille; (ii) lifts with floor announcements in speech; (iii) yellow tiles leading from MAB gate to the library; and (iv) door chime at the entrance of the library. These yellow tiles mentioned by MAB were not the common tiles but they have a purpose to indicate to the blind through their uneven surface whether to move ahead, or whether they are standing at an entrance / door, etc. St. Nicholas mentioned that they had converted some single and double steps into slopes to make it safer and easier for VIPs.

4.6.5   Concessions

As Table 4.39 indicates, more than half of the libraries did not provide any form of concessions for VIPs. Seven or 38.9% of the libraries surveyed provided some form of concessions for VIPs. These libraries were Johor, Kedah, Melaka, Sabah, Sarawak, MAB, and St. Nicholas.

Table 4.39
Number of libraries providing concessions for VIPs

	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries	Percentage (%)
Provide	5	31.25	2	100	7	38.9
Do not provide	11	68.75	0	0	11	61.1
Total	16	100	2	100	18	100

Table 4.40 shows the types of concessions that were provided by the libraries. Each library may provide one or more concessions. All 7 libraries provided concessions for payment of library membership registration fees. Three libraries provided concessions for overdue charges. And 4 libraries mentioned that they also provided other forms of concessions. The other forms of concessions mentioned include: waiving all charges; the production of Braille and audio materials on request; free use of Internet service and free postal of talking books; and concessions for all chargeable services except fines.

Table 4.40
Number of libraries providing various types of concessions for VIPs

Concessions	No. of libraries (n=7)	Percentage (%)
Payment for library membership registration fees	7	100
Payment of overdue charges	3	42.9
Others	4	57.1

4.6.6 Studies conducted on the provision of library services for VIPs

Only 1 or 5.6% of the libraries had conducted some form of study on the provision of library services for VIPs. St. Nicholas had conducted an 'Information Service Survey'. This survey was conducted to identify the type of publications, subjects and topics that their members and users were interested in. The main purpose of obtaining these information was to help St. Nicholas set up an information section covering all aspects of blindness and matters of special interest to the blind. This project to set up the information section has yet to be implemented.

It can be seen from the results that there is a lack of emphasis by the libraries to conduct studies related to the provision of library services for VIPs.

4.7   Provision of library services for VIPs

The second research question was concerning libraries with provision of library services for VIPs and sought to find out:

(1) What were the problems faced by these libraries in their provision of this

service? and

(2) What were the factors that facilitated the provision of this service?

This section will present the results obtained from the questionnaire replies pertaining to these questions.

The libraries which provided services for VIPs were requested to answer Part F of the questionnaire. Eight libraries out of the 18 libraries answered Part F of the questionnaire. Two of the libraries were the special libraries and the other 6 libraries are public libraries which had made provisions of library services for VIPs. The list of these 8 libraries is provided in Table 4.41 and is arranged according to category and in alphabetical order.

Table 4.41
List of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs

Category	Name of library
Public Libraries	1. Labuan State Public Library Corporation (Labuan) 2. Penang State Public Library Corporation (Penang) 3. Perlis State Public Library Corporation (Perlis) 4. Sabah State Library (Sabah) 5. Sarawak State Library (Sarawak) 6. Selangor State Public Library Corporation (Selangor)
Special Libraries	1. Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) 2. St. Nicholas Institute for the Visually Handicapped (St. Nicholas)

Year established provision of library services for VIPs

The libraries which provided library services for VIPs were also requested to provide the year that their library first provided this service. The special libraries in Malaysia were providing library services for the VIPs before any public library in the country.

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The first to provide this service was MAB in 1952 and St Nicholas Institute in the

1960s. A few decades lapsed before the Sabah State Library started providing services

for VIPs in 1996. This is followed by Penang and Sarawak in 2000, Labuan in 2001,

and Perlis in 2004. Selangor was unable to provide the year it started providing services

for VIPs.

4.7.1 Problems and challenges faced by libraries

The libraries were asked concerning the problems or challenges faced by them in the

provision of library services for VIPs. Some options were given to the libraries to select

and they were also given the option of specifying other problems that were not listed in

the options given. They were instructed to provide as many problems as were relevant

to their libraries. Table 4.42 provides the libraries responses to this question.

Table 4.42
Problems faced by libraries in the provision of library services for VIPs

Problems	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries (n=6)	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries (n=2)	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries (n=8)	Percentage (%)
Lack of financial funds	3	50	2	100	5	62.5
High level of reliance on volunteers	0	0	2	100	2	25
Problems in getting in touch with potential visually impaired users	5	83.3	2	100	7	87.5
Lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services	4	66.67	1	50	5	62.5
Lack of support from authoritative bodies	0	0	1	50	1	12.5

| Others | 1 | 16.67 | 2 | 100 | 3 | 37.5 |

Lack of financial funds

Overall, 5 (62.5%) of the 8 libraries had faced problems with insufficient funds. This problem was faced by both (100%) of the special libraries. As for the public libraries, half (3 out of 6) of the public libraries faced this problem.

High level of reliance on volunteers

Volunteers were used in the production of library materials. In Section 4.3, it was found that 4 of the libraries used volunteers in their production process. Two of the libraries were public libraries and 2 were special libraries. The libraries were asked whether they had a problem with high level of reliance on volunteers, and only 2 (25%) of the 8 libraries found that it was a problem faced by their libraries. Both of the libraries were special libraries.

This shows that the special libraries faced a problem with the high level of reliance on volunteers but the public libraries did not face this problem.

Getting in touch with potential visually impaired users

Getting in touch with potential visually impaired users was the problem faced by the most libraries compared with the other problems listed. Seven or 87.5% of the 8 libraries faced this problem. From the 7 libraries, 2 were special libraries and 5 were public libraries.

Lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services

A total of 5 (62.5%) of the 8 libraries found that the lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services was a problem that they faced. From the 5 libraries, 4 were public libraries and 1 was a special library.

Lack of support from authoritative bodies

The lack of support from authoritative bodies was only found to be a problem by 1 special library. This library felt that the lack of support from authoritative bodies such as publishers and book authors was a problem faced by it.

Other problems

Three or 37.5% of the 8 libraries had stated that they had faced other problems besides the 5 options listed in the questionnaire. From the 3 libraries, 1 library was a public library, and 2 were special libraries. The 3 libraries gave varied replies which resisted categorisation.

The public library listed 3 problems:

- Lack of technical know how which leads to expensive repair bills when the equipment goes out of order;
- Lack of communication between library and visually impaired users; and
- Lack of proper equipment.

The 2 special libraries stated 1 problem each. The problems given were the labour-intensive and time consuming process of Braille production; and the difficulty in recruiting competent staff for producing materials.

Thus, it can be seen from the results provided that the main problems faced by libraries with provision of library services for VIPs are getting in touch with potential visually impaired users, the lack of financial funds, and the lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services.

4.7.1.1 Opinion on ways to solve problems faced

Besides identifying the problems faced by the libraries, the libraries were also asked to provide their opinion on how the problems faced could be reduced or solved. This was an open-ended question. All 8 libraries provided their opinions on ways to solve the problems faced by them. Each library gave at least 1 opinion, with 1 library giving up to 5 opinions. Most of the opinions vary, however, some were similar.

The most common opinion shared by 3 libraries was the increase of funding for library services for VIPs and for the library in general. Two libraries, which had stated that they had problems in getting in touch with potential visually impaired users, were in the opinion that the improvement of transportation services to the library would help improve the situation.

Two libraries gave their opinions concerning library staff. One library mentioned that the staff should be trained and the other library states that staff should be given salaries which commensurate with their competence.

One library suggested that welfare bodies should provide the population figures of VIPs to the library. Another library gave an opinion somewhat similar to this opinion. The library states that libraries should obtain the co-operation of the Department of Social Welfare and societies for the blind to obtain the total number of VIPs who were

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interested in library services for VIPs. Both these libraries had faced the same problems which were getting in touch with potential visually impaired users, and the lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services.

One library gave 2 opinions on the role of the management. First, management should be serious and committed to providing library services for VIPs equal to library services for the sighted. The other opinion was that management should ensure VIP-friendly access of library buildings and facilities.

Other opinions given by the libraries include the recruitment and training of volunteers on an on-going basis; libraries paying competent persons a certain rate for producing a certain quantity of Braille and audio materials; and authors and publishers providing libraries with soft copies of books for translation into Braille or into DAISY format.

4.7.2 Facilitating factors for the provision of library services for VIPs

Part F also sought to find out from libraries with provision of library services for VIPs concerning the factors that facilitated their provision of this service. Three factors were listed for their selection and the libraries were also given the option of specifying other factors. The libraries had the option of selecting as many factors as were relevant to them. All 8 libraries provided answers for this question. The results can be seen in Table 4.43.

Table 4.43
Factors that facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs

Factors	Public Libraries		Special Libraries		Total Libraries	
	No. of libraries (n=6)	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries (n=2)	Percentage (%)	No. of libraries (n=8)	Percentage (%)
Directives from the government	1	16.67	0	0	1	12.5

Initiative from the library's Director	6	100	1	50	7	87.5
Request from NGOs	4	66.67	1	50	5	62.5
Others	2	33.3	2	100	4	50

Only 1 library stated that directives from the government had facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs. The facilitating factor that has the most selection was 'Initiative from the library's Director'. Overall, 7 or 87.5% of the 8 libraries felt that this was a facilitating factor. These 7 libraries included all the 6 public libraries. This means that these libraries' Directors had played an important role in making library services for VIPs in public libraries a reality. Request from NGOs was also an important facilitating factor as 62.5% or 5 libraries selected this factor.

Four libraries gave other factors which had facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs. Each of the 4 libraries gave different facilitating factors. The factors are:

- Smart partnerships with other agencies and NGOs within the country and overseas;
- Support from volunteers;
- New technology in book production; and
- The mission and vision of their institution.

Overall, leadership from library Directors have played an important role in facilitating the provision of library services for VIPs, as compared to other factors.

4.8   Non-provision of library services for VIPs

This section will present the results obtained from Part G of the questionnaire. Libraries which did not have provision of library services for VIPs were requested to answer this part. The results obtained from the libraries will answer the third research question concerned with the factors that hinder libraries from providing library services for VIPs. Nine public libraries provided answers for Part G. The libraries are PNM, Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, and Perak. This left 1 library which did not answer either Part F or Part G of the questionnaire.

A review of the questionnaire reply given by Terengganu indicated that they had 6 types of library equipments for VIPs which included a magnifier, a screen magnifier, a CCTV, a scanner, a Braille translation software and a Braille printer. This would indicate that VIPs were a target group of users for this library as none of these equipments (with the exception of the scanner) will normally be used by a sighted user. A phone conversation with the library's Librarian shed light on the situation. According to the Librarian, they had purchased these library equipment for VIPs, however, they had yet to start providing these equipments or services for VIPs as they felt that these equipments were insufficient and they were still in the process of acquiring more equipment and also materials for VIPs. At the moment they did not face any problems with funds but they were lacking in staff. Since Terengganu had yet to begin their services for VIPs, the 6 types of equipments were not included in the results in Section 4.4.

The rest of this section will be on the analysis of answers provided by the 9 libraries. The libraries were asked to state their opinion on the possible factors that have hindered the provision of library services for VIPs in their libraries. Seven factors were listed for their selection and the libraries were also given the option of specifying other factors.

The libraries had the option of selecting as many factors as were relevant to them. The

results are shown in Table 4.44.

Table 4.44
Factors that hindered the provision of library services for VIPs

Factors	No. of libraries (n=9)	Percentage (%)
Lack of financial funds	6	66.7
The number of VIPs are too small	3	33.3
Lack of interest shown by VIPs	4	44.4
Lack of co-operation between libraries specialising in services to VIPs and public libraries	3	33.3
Lack of support from library committee members	1	11.1
This service is not necessary	0	0
There are sufficient library services for VIPs provided by other libraries	0	0
Others	3	33.3

66.7% or 6 of the 9 libraries stated that the 'lack of financial funds' hindered the

provision of library services for VIPs. This factor was the most frequently selected

factor. 'Lack of interest shown by VIPs' was the second most frequently selected factor.

Four (44.4%) of the libraries selected this factor. Three (33.3%) of the libraries felt that

'the number of VIPs are too small' and could be a factor which hindered the provision

of this service in their libraries. Three libraries also felt that there was a 'lack of co-

operation between libraries specialising in services to VIPs and public libraries'. 11.1% or 1 library felt that there was 'lack of support from library committee members'.

None of the libraries felt that 'this service is not necessary'. None of them also felt that 'there are sufficient library services for VIPs provided by other libraries'. This suggests that libraries do have a certain level of awareness concerning library services for VIPs.

Three libraries or 33.3% specified other factors that may have hindered the provision of library services for VIPs. Two libraries provided 1 factor each and 1 library provided 2 factors. The factors provided were:

- Not prepared;
- Lack of expertise;
- Lack of suitable facilities; and
- No demand from the disabled to use the library.

The last factor was similar with the factor provided in the questionnaire: 'Lack of interest shown by VIPs'.

Part G also requested the libraries to elaborate in further detail on the reasons why they did not provide library services for VIPs. This was an open-ended question. Seven libraries provided answers for this question. The libraries did not elaborate in much detail. Some libraries took the opportunity to add in other factors which may have hindered the provision of services instead of elaborating on the answers they had given in the previous question. The answers provided by the libraries are as follows:

- There was no demand from VIPs, neither was there any demand from associations, societies, or agencies representing VIPs;
- No accessible format library materials were offered by book suppliers;

- No support from higher authorities;

- The budget allocation was insufficient as the equipments for VIPs require a large sum of money;

- Lack of trained staff to serve VIPs;

- Lack of special equipments for VIPs;

- The library still lacks in terms of infrastructure, manpower and also expertise to provide services for VIPs.

4.9 Summary

The results of the questionnaire were presented in 8 sections of this chapter. The first 6 sections (Section 4.1 to Section 4.6) seeks to answer the first research question on the current status of the provision of library services for VIPs among public libraries and special libraries in Malaysia. Section 4.7 provided information on the 8 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs, with special emphasis on the problems they faced and the factors which have facilitated their provision of this service. Section 4.8 provided the factors which hindered the provision of library services for VIPs.

The next chapter provides the summary, discussions and conclusions of the findings, and recommendations for improvements and for further studies.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the outline of the study, followed by the summary, discussions, and conclusions of the key findings. Recommendations would be given for improvements of library services for VIPs and also recommendations for further study.

5.1　Outline of the study

The estimated population of VIPs in Malaysia of 888,420 in the year 2005 was calculated based on the prevalence level given in the study by Resnikoff et al. (2004). It was felt that there was a need to find out about the current levels of provision of library services by both public libraries and special libraries for VIPs. Thus, the objectives of this study was to find out the current level of provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia, the problems faced by the libraries with reference to this provision, the factors which facilitated this provision, and the factors that influenced the non-provision of library services for VIPs.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current status of the provision of library services for VIPs by public libraries and libraries specialising in library services for VIPs in Malaysia, in terms of the provision of materials, equipments, services, and the management of their libraries?

2. For libraries with provision of library services for VIPs, what are the problems faced by them, and what are the factors that facilitated the provision of this service? and

3. For public libraries without provision of library services for VIPs, what are the factors that hinder them from providing this service?

The scope of this study was limited to Malaysia's public libraries at the national and state level, and the special libraries for VIPs. This study used the postal survey method. The questionnaire consisted of 8 parts touching on all the 3 research questions. The questionnaire was put through pre-testing before being finalised. The finalised questionnaires in 2 different languages (English and Bahasa Melayu) were sent to the sample of 18 libraries. A 100% response rate was achieved. The data from the questionnaire responses was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) student edition version 11.0 for Windows.

The results and data analysis was presented in the previous chapter. This chapter continues from the previous chapter by giving a summary of the findings with discussions and conclusions. Some comparison would be made between the findings of this study and that of the UK studies by Craddock (1985) and LISU (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000). Whenever there is a comparison, it is imperative to keep in mind of the differences between the UK studies and this study, which are:

- the UK studies were conducted solely on public libraries and did not include special libraries;

- the sample for the questionnaire in the UK studies consisted of all public library authorities in the UK, whereas, this study only included certain categories of public libraries in Malaysia, namely the national and state categories; and

- the study by Craddock (1985) was more than 2 decades old and focused on the blind and not on VIPs.

5.2   Key findings - Summary, discussions, and conclusions

Background of libraries

The questionnaire responses showed that the 18 libraries were established between 1881 and 2000. Ten of these libraries were found to not have any provision of library services for VIPs at the time of replying the questionnaire. These libraries were PNM, Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, and Terengganu. It was noted that Terengganu was in the midst of preparing themselves to provide library services for VIPs.

As for the provision of library services for VIPs, 8 libraries were found to have provision for library services for VIPs. They were Labuan, Penang, Perlis, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, MAB, and St. Nicholas. MAB was the earliest to provide library services for VIPs in the year 1952, followed by St. Nicholas in the 1960s. Thus, the special libraries have been providing library services for VIPs for approximately half a century now. Whereas for the public libraries, the provision of library services for VIPs started much later on. The earliest public library to provide this service was Sabah which started provision about a decade ago and the most recent public library to provide this service was Perlis in 2004. Thus, the provision of library services for VIPs among public libraries was still relatively new compared to the provision by the special libraries. This must be kept in mind whenever there is any comparison made on the provision of this service between public libraries and special libraries.

All 18 libraries could provide the statistics of their total library membership. Only 3 libraries (16.67%) could provide the statistics of the total number of visually impaired members. Even more disappointing was that only 3 libraries (16.67%) could provide the

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statistics of the total number of disabled members. The availability of this type of statistics is crucial to justify the existence or need of various special services, to request for additional budget allocation, and for planning and decision making.

As for the libraries' main source of funds, the public libraries' main source of funds was government funding. It was found that special libraries had to rely on donations from the public as their main source of funds. This makes it harder for special libraries as they have to rely on the generosity of the public for the continuance and improvement of their services.

Library materials for VIPs

The libraries were queried on the provision of 5 different types of library materials: large print books, Braille books, talking books, talking magazines, and talking newspapers.

It was found that the level of provision of accessible format library materials for VIPs was rather low. Overall, 38.9% of the 18 libraries provided large print books, 27.8% provided Braille books, 38.9% provided talking books, 5.6% provided talking magazines, and 5.6% provided talking newspapers.

The provision level among the 16 public libraries was even lower than the overall level of provision among all 18 libraries. For the level of provision among the public libraries, 37.5% of public libraries provided large print books, 18.75% Braille books, and 31.25% talking books. There were no provision for talking magazines and talking newspapers among public libraries. The study by Craddock (1985) found a lower level of provision of Braille books among public libraries with only 8.6% providing Braille books.

For large print books, a total quantity of 1,653 was being provided by 7 libraries in Malaysia. 96% of these were being provided by public libraries. These large print books can be used not only by the visually impaired users but also by sighted users. It was found that the large print books in a few of the public libraries were used by sighted users and not the visually impaired. Thus, the provision of large print books did not necessarily indicate that the libraries were targeting VIPs as their target group of users.

For Braille books, a total quantity of 3,383 was being provided. The 2 special libraries contributed about 80% of the total provision. The balance 20% was provided by the 3 public libraries. This showed that even though there were a higher number of public libraries providing Braille books compared to the number of special libraries, the majority quantity of Braille books provided by libraries in Malaysia were still being provided by special libraries.

 In terms of the number of talking books in audio cassette format, the results showed that about 70% were provided by special libraries. The balance of 30% was provided by 4 public libraries. As for the number of talking books in CD format provided by the libraries, the results were different from the audio cassette format. For the CD format, 87.16% of the total number provided by libraries in Malaysia was provided by the 3 public libraries. Only 12.84% was provided by a special library.

The provision of a higher number of audio cassette talking books by special libraries compared to public libraries, and the provision of a higher number of CD talking books by public libraries compared to special libraries could be due to the fact that library services for VIPs by public libraries started within the last decade. And instead of providing talking

books in audio cassette format, public libraries went directly to the provision of talking books in CD format which is of a newer technology.

Production of library materials for VIPs

It was found that 3 (18.75%) of the 16 public libraries produced library materials for VIPs. Craddock's (1985) study had found a lower level of 7.89% (12 out of the 152 public libraries surveyed in the UK) producing library materials for VIPs.

Overall, this study found 27.8% or 5 of the total 18 libraries had produced library materials for VIPs. From the 5 libraries, all (100%) produced Braille books, 4 (80%) produced talking books, 1 (20%) produced talking magazines, 1 (20%) produced talking newspapers, and 2 (40%) produced other materials (i.e. tactile graphic books, and large print materials). Generally, the libraries produced their own materials to better provide for the various needs and demands of VIPs.

Volunteers were relied on to assist in the production process in 4 (80%) of these libraries. The volunteers' functions in the 4 libraries were mainly reading for the production of talking books and typing for Braille production. Two of the 4 libraries, which relied on volunteers, later stated in their response to a question in Part F of the questionnaire, that the high reliance on volunteers was a problem faced by their library. These 2 libraries were special libraries. The high reliance of volunteers by special libraries could be due to the reason that special libraries may not have sufficient staff or may not have sufficient funds to hire adequate number of staff.

Library equipments for VIPs

Information on the provision of assistive equipments to be used within library premises by VIPs was obtained by the questionnaire. Six (33.3%) of the 18 libraries provided audio cassette players, and 4 (22.2%) provided CD players.

As for magnifying devices, this study found none of the libraries provided magnifiers. This finding differed greatly from Craddock's (1985) as Craddock (1985) found 17.8% of public libraries in the UK provided magnifiers. This study found none of the libraries provided magnifying lamps, 3 libraries (16.7%) provided screen magnifiers, and 1 library (5.6%) provided CCTVs. For Computer Assistive Technology, 4 libraries (22.2%) provided computers with internet access, 5 libraries (27.8%) provided scanners, 4 libraries (22.2%) provided screen readers, 4 libraries (22.2%) provided Braille translation software, 4 libraries (22.2%) provided Braille printers, 1 library (5.6%) provided refreshable Braille display, and none provided Kurzweil or Optacon reading devices. Four (22.2%) of the 18 libraries also provided other equipments (i.e. Braille typewriters, scientific calculator, and BrailleNotes).

Just like the provision of accessible format library materials for VIPs, the number of libraries with provision of library equipments for VIPs was also low. The information given in the previous paragraph showed that for any 1 type of library equipment, the highest level of provision was 33.3%. In other words, none of the library equipments were being provided by more than one third of the libraries.

The total number of library equipments provided for VIPs to be used within library premises in public and special libraries in Malaysia were 30 audio cassette players, 12 CD

players, 3 screen magnifiers, 1 CCTV, 12 computers with internet access, 8 scanners, 8 screen readers, 8 Braille translation software, 5 Braille printers, 1 refershable Braille display, 6 Braille typewriters, 1 scientific calculator, and 3 BrailleNotes. This total number is insufficient to meet the needs of the visually impaired population.

Information on the provision of library equipments provided for loan to VIPs was also obtained. One library (5.6%) provided audio cassette players for loan to VIPs. The number of audio cassette players provided for loan was 50. It was good effort shown by the library in providing this service and making this equipment available to 50 users at one time. None of the libraries provided CD players for loan to VIPs. Besides the players, 1 library (5.6%) also provided a Braille typewriter for loan to VIPs.

Services for VIPs

In terms of the current provision of library services for VIPs, 5 (27.8%) of the 18 libraries had their staff provided with training with reference to the provision of library services for VIPs. It was inferred that the staff were provided with training which were mainly on the production of materials and the use of assistive equipment.

Six (33.3%) of the libraries surveyed provided cataloguing of accessible format library materials for VIPs. The results had shown that the majority of the libraries with provision of library materials for VIPs in this country had not neglected cataloguing these materials.

14 of the public libraries surveyed were found to provide interlibrary loan services. However, from these 14 libraries, only 4 libraries or 28.6% actually provided interlibrary loan services for materials suitable for VIPs. Interlibrary loan services for materials suitable

for VIPs can be provided by any library even if they did not provide any accessible format materials in their library. This can be done as long as libraries with and libraries without accessible format library materials for VIPs are willing to co-operate with each other.

In the UK, the Disability Discrimination Act can impel public libraries to provide interlibrary loan services for alternative format materials as it was "unlawful for libraries to refuse a request for alternative format materials, and the inter-lending system must therefore be able to process this requirement." (National Library for the Blind, 2001, In, Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001). There is currently no legislation in Malaysia which is known to the author to have similar capacity as the above act in the UK.

What was rather surprising, from the results of the study, was that none of the special libraries provided interlibrary loan services. If they are able to provide this service to their users, they would be providing an opportunity for their users to gain access to so much more than what their library could provide on its own. The special libraries could also provide this service to other libraries by being a source for other libraries to obtain accessible format library materials for VIPs. This would encourage more libraries, especially public libraries, to provide services for VIPs.

As for mobile library services, 13 public libraries provided this service. From these 13 libraries, only 1 library provided accessible format library materials in their mobile libraries. Libraries with both mobile library services and library materials for VIPs should be encouraged to provide these materials in their mobile libraries as all the necessary materials and services are already available. What is left is only the organisation of the materials and services.

Mobile libraries can actually be used by the libraries as a promotional tool to promote library services for VIPs who live in the suburbs or outskirts of the country. In Chairat's (1999) paper it was suggested that in order to improve the situation in libraries which provided services for VIPs but did not provide any mobile library services as in the case of the Caulfield Memorial Library in Thailand, cooperation should arise between these libraries and other libraries with existing mobile library services.

As for postal services for VIPs, only 3 libraries (16.7%) provided this service, even though postage is free. From these 3 libraries, only 1 is a public library. Craddock (1985) also found dismal results as only 11% or 17 public libraries provided postal services for the blind. Postage is also free in the UK.

This study found that not all the libraries which have provision of accessible format library materials for VIPs were delivering these materials to VIPs through postal services. Postal service is beneficial to many VIPs who do not live within travelling distance to a library which provides accessible format library materials. Even if some of the VIPs did live within travelling distance, receiving these materials through post is a convenient and ideal alternative.

Management of library

Three (16.7%) of the 18 libraries had a specific budget allocation for library services for VIPs. Similarly, the LISU study also found that most libraries did not have a specific budget allocation for library services for VIPs (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000).

This study found that the average number of types of materials, equipments, and services provided by libraries was higher for libraries with specific budget allocation as compared to libraries without specific budget allocation. Thus, having a specific budget allocation would probably help libraries in planning and managing their libraries better.

None of the libraries had an explicit policy on the provision of library services for VIPs. In the UK, 5% of the public libraries had an explicit policy (Evans, 2000). Only 1 library (5.6%) in this study had some form of policy which had also covered or included services for VIPs in part of the policy. The results were rather disappointing given the importance of having guidelines/policies for library services for VIPs. The study conducted by LISU (Evans, 2000), as mentioned in the Literature Review, showed a relationship between the existence of a policy statement and the provision of a wider range of special services. However, in this study the author was unable to make a comparison as none of the libraries had an explicit policy statement, and only 1 library had a policy in other areas which had included services for VIPs.

Seven libraries (38.9%) had on-going co-operation with other organisations working with VIPs. From these 7 libraries, 6 had provision for library services for VIPs. Since there were 8 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs, this meant that the other 2 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs did not have any kind of on-going co-operation with other organisations working with VIPs.

Six libraries (33.3%) had made efforts to provide easy access to their building facilities. From these 6 libraries, 4 were libraries with provision of library services for VIPs. This meant that another 4 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs had not made

efforts to provide easy access to its building facilities. Easy access to building facilities is an important factor that could affect the library's patronage level among VIPs. Libraries which currently do not have provision of library services for VIPs should also make efforts to provide easy access for VIPs and other disabled. If there are plans to construct a new building or if it is already under construction (as in the case of Johor), steps should be taken to incorporate the needs of the disabled into the design of the building.

As for the provision of library concessions for VIPs, 7 libraries (38.9%) had provided some form of concessions for VIPs. Library concessions are important to encourage VIPs to make use of library services. Library concessions are especially important if the concessions are provided for recurring charges such as for the use of internet facilities. It was found that the most frequently mentioned barrier for VIPs in accessing the internet was cost (Williamson, Schauder and Bow, 2000). Thus, libraries should not only provide the equipments but also make it affordable for VIPs to use the facilities.

Only 1 or 5.6% of the libraries had conducted some form of study on the provision of library services for VIPs. More studies should be conducted to ensure that proper planning and decisions are made before implementation.

Problems faced by libraries in provision of library services for VIPs

Overall, 8 (44.4%) of the 18 libraries had made provision of library services for VIPs and were targeting VIPs as a target group of users. These libraries stated the problems they faced in their provision of library services for VIPs and they also gave their opinion on how their problems could be reduced or solved.

The problem faced by most (87.5%) of the 8 libraries was the problem of getting in touch with potential visually impaired users. This was followed by the 'lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services' (62.5%). Some of the libraries which had stated that these were problems faced by their libraries gave their opinion that these problems could be reduced or solved by co-operating with the Department of Social Welfare and other organisations for the blind at state level in obtaining information of the visually impaired population. Some were in the opinion that improvements in the public transportation to the libraries would help.

Another problem faced by 62.5% of the 8 libraries was 'the lack of financial funds'. The libraries were in the opinion that to solve this problem, funds should be increased or channelled for this service. None of the libraries elaborated on how the funds could be increased or how they would get the funds channelled for this service.

The high level of reliance on volunteers was felt to be a problem by 25% or 2 of the libraries. One of these libraries also added that it was difficult to recruit competent staff to produce alternative format materials. The opinions given to reduce or solve these problems was to provide staff with salaries that commensurate with their competence, to recruit and train volunteers on a on-going basis, and to pay competent persons at piece rate for producing materials.

Only 1 library (12.5%) found the lack of support from authoritative bodies to be a problem. The authoritative bodies in mind were the book publishers and book authors. This library also added another problem to its list by stating that the Braille production process is labour-intensive and time consuming. The opinion given by the library to solve their

problem was that the publishers and authors could provide the libraries serving VIPs with soft copies of their books in order for the libraries to translate into Braille or into DAISY format.

Factors which facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs

These 8 libraries were also asked about the factors which had facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs. The factor which had facilitated the majority (87.5%) of the 8 libraries in providing this service was the 'initiative from the library's Director'. 62.5% felt that request made by NGOs was a facilitating factor. Only 12.5% of the libraries stated that directives from the government had facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs. These facilitating factors could be very important indicators of the role that certain parties can play in ensuring that there was provision for certain minority groups like the VIPs.

Factors which hinder the provision of library services for VIPs

As for the libraries which did not provide library services for VIPs, the main factor which hindered the provision was the 'lack of financial funds' (66.7%). The second most frequently selected factor was the 'lack of interest shown by VIPs' (44.4%). This was followed by 33.3% with the assumption that the number of VIPs was too small. Also 33.3% felt that there was a lack of co-operation between libraries specialising in services to VIPs and public libraries and this may have hindered their provision. 11.1% or 1 library felt that there was lack of support from library committee members. None of the libraries had the attitude that the provision of library services for VIPs was not necessary. None of them also felt that the provision of library services for VIPs provided by other libraries was already sufficient.

The factors provided by the libraries had brought to light the possible causes of the low level of provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia. Steps could be taken in order to eliminate or reduce these factors in order to increase the level of provision of library services for VIPs.

Conclusion

From the key findings of this study, all 3 research questions were answered. In the past decade, developments can be seen in the number of public libraries which were providing library services for VIPs. The number of public libraries with provision has been growing from no public libraries with provision prior to 1996 to 6 public libraries currently with provision. Soon the number will increase to 7 public libraries once Terengganu commences their provision. However, even though there were more public libraries now providing library services for VIPs, many improvements can be made to increase the level of provision in terms of the management of the libraries, and the number of materials, equipment, and services provided by both the special libraries and public libraries.

5.3   Recommendations

Recommendations for improvements of library services for VIPs and recommendations for further studies would be provided in this section.

5.3.1   Recommendations for improvements in library services for VIPs

The recommendations for improvements in library services for VIPs are provided based on the findings of the study. The first 3 recommendations pertain to the roles that can be played by various parties in order to bring about better library services for VIPs in Malaysia. The fourth recommendation recommends that a partnership be formed between

the 18 libraries studied. The fifth recommendation lists various measures for the improvement of individual libraries.

5.3.1.1 The role of the government

Only 1 (12.5%) out of the 8 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs felt that directives from the government had been a facilitating factor in their provision of library services for VIPs. The author feels that the government can play a much more important role in encouraging the provision of library services for VIPs among the public libraries. According to Craddock (1997), "Scandinavian [library] models demonstrate that co-ordination is most effective where central government has spearheaded development by the provision of funding, legislation and directional policies and the creation or support of national institutions."

There are 2 main ways in which the government may play a bigger role. They are in the provision of funding and legislation. The findings indicate that 62.5% of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs faced problems of lack of funds. Also, 66.7% of the libraries without provision of library services for VIPs felt that the lack of funds was a factor that hindered the provision of library services for VIPs. The federal and state government is currently providing funds for public libraries. The government can thus ensure that a certain percentage of their funds are allocated for library services for VIPs, or they can provide additional funds specifically for the provision of this service. Thus, the government is able to strongly influence the public libraries to make provision of library services for VIPs.

Legislation such as the proposed Persons with Disabilities Act 2002 drafted by the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development (Penang Down Syndrome Association, 2005a) can play an important role towards the equalisation of opportunities including the equalisation of access to information. Section 5 of Part 5 of this draft act states that "relevant authorities shall develop programmes to make information services and documentation accessible for different groups of persons with disability. Braille, tape services, large print and other appropriate technologies should be used to provide access to written information and documentation for persons with visual impairments …" (Penang Down Syndrome Association, 2005b).

5.3.1.2 The role of library directors and management

The results of this study show that 87.5% of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs felt that the initiative taken by their library's Director was a factor which facilitated their provision of this service. This clearly indicates the important role that library Directors play in leading the library. Directors of libraries which currently do not provide library services for VIPs should take their cue from the Directors of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs and make efforts to lead their library towards the provision of library services for VIPs.

Directors of libraries with services for VIPs could also help influence their peers into providing this service. Special libraries and NGOs such as the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) can hold special dialogue or meetings with library Directors to discuss the possibility of more public libraries providing services for VIPs.

5.3.1.3 The role of NGOs

A total of 87.5% of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs faced problems in getting in touch with potential visually impaired users. 62.5% found that the lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services was a problem faced by their libraries. NGOs can play an important role in helping to reduce these problems. NGOs such as the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) and other associations, societies and organisations working with VIPs can raise awareness among VIPs by providing the VIPs with relevant information about that availability of library services. These NGOs can also provide libraries with information on VIPs such as the number of VIPs in a certain area covered by the libraries, the contact details of VIPs, and so on.

As for libraries without provision of library services for VIPs, the findings of this study showed that 44.4% of these libraries felt that the lack of interest shown by VIPs was a factor that hindered the provision of library services for VIPs. One of these libraries also added that not only were there no demand from VIPs, there were also no demand from associations, societies, or agencies representing VIPs. Also 33.3% of the libraries without provision of library services for VIPs felt that the number of VIPs was too small. NGOs can play an important role by being the collective voice of VIPs and to demand on behalf of VIPs for equitable library services. This can be done through awareness campaigns, petitions, and so on. NGOs can also obtain the support from large corporate bodies towards the achievement of this goal.

5.3.1.4 Partnership between public libraries and special libraries for VIPs

Both public libraries and special libraries for VIPs have their own strengths which can contribute towards the improvement of library services for VIPs in Malaysia. Public

libraries provide local access and a comprehensive network of libraries (which includes mobile libraries) which are able to reach out to the public all around the country. Special libraries have the expertise and currently they also provide the bulk of materials, equipments, and services for VIPs in Malaysia. Public libraries and special libraries can work together by utilising each others' strengths towards a common objective of improving library services for VIPs. Public libraries and special libraries can form a co-operative partnership towards achieving this objective. A committee can be formed to steer this partnership. The committee members should consist of the national library, the state public libraries, and the special libraries.

There are various areas in which this partnership can work on. One of the areas of co-operation which this study found to be lacking is interlibrary loan services. The findings of this study show that 80% of Braille books and 70% of talking books in Malaysia are provided by special libraries. Whereas, 96% of large print titles are provided by public libraries. This indicates a lack of balance in the provision of the various types of accessible format materials between public libraries and special libraries.

Through interlibrary loan services, VIPs can go to the nearest library (be it a public library or a special library) and request for various accessible format library materials. However, in order for interlibrary loan services of accessible format library materials to be successfully implemented, there has to be a national union catalogue of all accessible format library materials available in all public and special libraries in the country. This is another area of co-operation which can be worked out through this partnership.

Another area of co-operation is the training of staff. Special libraries have the expertise and experience in serving VIPs. Thus, special libraries can play an important role in providing training for public library staff.

87.5% of the libraries with provision of library services for VIPs mentioned that they had problems in getting in touch with potential visually impaired users. And 62.5% mentioned that the lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services was a problem faced by them. This clearly shows that marketing and promotions can play an important role in the provision of library services for VIPs. Through a partnership, each library need not promote and market their services individually but all the libraries can do so as one with sustained nationwide promotional campaigns.

Due to the lack of commercially produced accessible format materials (especially in Bahasa Melayu), libraries have resorted in producing their own materials. With these individual libraries producing their own materials, duplication in bound to occur if there were no partnership or communication between these libraries. Also 2 of the libraries in the study mentioned that they faced problems related to the production of accessible formation materials due to it being time consuming and due to the difficulty in recruiting competent staff. One library was in the opinion that this problem can be reduced or solved if publishers were to provide soft copies of the books for translation into Braille or into DAISY format. The author does not know of any indication of whether or not the publishers would agree to this request, however, it is felt that if the request is made by a collective voice representing libraries serving VIPs in Malaysia, then the chances of an agreement could possibly be higher.

Through a partnership of libraries, research relevant to library services for VIPs can also be conducted more efficiently and at a larger scale compared to research that would be conducted by individual libraries.

Thus it can be seen that there can be many possible benefits of a partnership among libraries towards a common goal of equalisation of library services for VIPs. Examples of countries which have benefited from the forming of partnerships between public libraries and special libraries for VIPs are the UK through the Share the Vision (STV) partnership agency (Craddock, 1997), and Canada through the VISUNET: CANADA Partners Program (Griebel, 2000). Malaysia too can hope to benefit from this type of partnership as 33.3% of the libraries without provision of library services for VIPs feel that the lack of co-operation between special libraries and public libraries was a factor that hindered their provision of this service.

5.3.1.5 Recommendations for individual libraries

Besides working with other libraries on a national level, individual libraries can also work at improving their own libraries with reference to library services for VIPs. The libraries should work on the following aspects of their services for VIPs:

(i)   Providing an explicit policy statement for the provision of library services for VIPs;

(ii)   Providing a specific budget allocation for the provision of library services for VIPs;

(iii)   Compiling statistics of library members who are visually impaired and also statistics of usage of accessible format materials and assistive equipments;

(iv)   Providing easy access to their building facilities including easy access within the library building, within the library compound, and easy access of transportation to the library;

(v)   Providing concessions for all chargeable services such as the use of internet services;

(vi)   Continuous co-operation with all libraries (public or special) serving VIPs, and government and non-government organisations working with VIPs; and

(vii)   Providing interlibrary loan services, postal services and mobile library services for accessible format library materials for VIPs.

5.3.2   Recommendations for further studies

Since the provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia is an area which has generally not been given much research coverage, there are actually many studies in this area that can be conducted. However, the recommendations for further research provided here are recommendations that are felt to be most relevant at this stage. The recommendations are as follows:

(i) Library services for VIPs from the users' perspective

Research on the needs and the level of satisfaction of VIPs pertaining to library services should be conducted. This study is only from the service providers' perspective. Having both research on the service providers' perspective and also the users' perspective allow for service providers to gauge their services and know their users in greater detail.

In 2001, the Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU) of Loughborough University conducted a large scale research on the users' perspective of library and information services for VIPs in the UK (Davies, Wisdom, and Creaser, 2001).

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(ii) Marketing and promotion of library services for VIPs

A study should be conducted on the marketing and promotion of library services for VIPs. The study should seek to find out, among other things:

- the current marketing and promotional activities conducted by libraries
- the effectiveness of marketing and promotional activities conducted
- how current users came to know about the library services for VIPs
- the level of awareness and the perception among users and non-users about the various library services for VIPs available

(iii) Case study on libraries with provision of library services for VIPs

A case study should be conducted on libraries with provision of library services for VIPs. This would provide more in-depth and qualitative information about these libraries.

The findings from this case study on may improve the understanding and provide greater detail on the background and the characteristics of these libraries. It should also study how the libraries persevered in the provision of library services for VIPs amidst all the problems faced. The information from this case study can be valuable for other libraries which are planning to provide library services for VIPs.

(iv) Follow up study on the current status of provision of library services for VIPs

A follow up of this study should be conducted after 5 years to compare the results of these studies. If time and money were not constraints, then the study could include all the public libraries instead of just selected libraries as in the case of this study.

5.4   Conclusion

This study has been a journey of discovery on a topic that has not been given much research attention in this country. It is hoped that the findings and the recommendations of the study will bring about much positive effects to the development of library services for VIPs in Malaysia.

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