LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR
DISTANCE EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

by

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A dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS)

University of Malaya
Malaysia
1998
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Sincere appreciation and gratitude are extended to all those individuals whose assistance to me have made this study possible.

I am grateful to Mr. Teh Kang Hai, my supervisor who has encouraged me to continue my study in the early period of this degree program and has freely given his time and effort to assist me throughout this dissertation research.

Warmest gratitude and appreciation are also extended to my MLIS classmates, especially to Miss Sharon and Miss Elizabeth for their assistance and friendship.

Appreciation is also extended to my dear friends YoungSul Lee and his wife Ann, David Boey and How Nyok Boon for their assistance and encouragement in various ways. Their support was truly inspirational.

Finally, I owe a special debt and gratitude to my parents, my sister Mary, Sook Hee, Sook Ngok, Sook Eng and my brother Pang Kim for their support, concern, patience, understanding and love all the way throughout my graduate study.
ABSTRACT

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April 1998

This study is designed to gather information about the current status of library and information services for distance education learners in Malaysia and also to explore the initiatives made by the distance education institutions in using Information Technology to provide library support to external-campus programs. This study uses the survey research method. Nine government-supported universities and colleges, four newly established private universities, and all private higher educational institutions and training institutions in Klang Valley were invited to participate in this survey. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to the participants to obtain the desired data. 48% out of the participants responded to the study.

Major findings of the survey are: most of the distance education institutions viewed as necessary and important to provide library and information services to the distance learning communities. While more than half of the institutions lack having guidelines and standards on library and information services, a majority of them, however, stated that it was necessary to establish standards and guidelines for providing library and information services to distance education programs in Malaysia. The basic
library services were available in most of the distance education institutions, but the more advanced information services such as computer-based information services were not provided to any great extent. The most often used means of providing the library and information services was face-to-face counter services, manned mostly by para-professionals who are not specially trained professional librarians but comprised the clerical and part-time support staff. The effort of the institutions to incorporate new developments in information technology to improve library services is not encouraging. This finding reveals that most of the institutions face financial problems because they did not have a protected fund or yearly budget plan for the library and information services. The major problems faced by the institutions include: lack of guidelines and policy, staff and time, funding and poorly equipped library resources. All the responding institutions agreed that the government should establish a national policy to develop a network of public libraries for distance learners and strongly agreed to have a distance education institution to implement electronic library or virtual library services to distance learners.

Finally, this survey proposed the Guidelines and Standards for Malaysian Distance Education Library and Information Services. A Librarian-Centred Model for the development and implementation of a support system for library and information services is suggested. Apart from this, the use of Information Technology was also introduced in exploring distance education library and information services.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .............................................. vii

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................... ix

Chapters

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................... 1

Objectives of the Study ................................... 3
Rationale of the Study ..................................... 4
Statement of the Problem ................................ 5
Research Questions ....................................... 7
Significance of the Study ................................ 7
Limitations ................................................ 8
Definition of the Terms ................................... 9

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ......................... 12

Introduction to Distance Education .................... 14
Theoretical Concepts and Terminologies of Distance Education ...... 16
The Geographical View on Literature of Library
Services for Distance Education .......................... 23
Developed Countries Vs Developing Countries .......... 23
The Distribution of Literature Sources ................ 28
Role of Libraries in Distance Education ................. 32
Guidelines and Standards ................................ 37
Organisation and Planning ................................ 40
Collection Management ................................... 44
Information and Support Services ....................... 45
Remote Access to Electronic Resources ................ 47
Bibliographic Instruction ................................ 51
Document Delivery ........................................ 53
Interlibrary Co-operation ................................ 54
Library Surveys and Research ............................ 56
User Studies ................................................ 59
Distance Education and the Library and Information Services
in Malaysia: a Literature Review .......................... 61
Internet Resources for Distance Education ............... 64

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ......................... 65

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures .......... 66
Sample ..................................................... 67
Instruments 69
  The Questionnaire 69
  The Interviews 70
Method of Analysis 72

IV. RESULTS AND PRESENTATION OF ANALYTICAL DATA 73

Background Information 75
Philosophical Consideration 78
Guidelines and Standard 79
Library Services 81
Management Issues 86
Personnel 91
Information Technology Issues 93
Financial Issues 97
Self-evaluation of the Institution’s Performance 99
Problems 100
Opinion 102
Summary 104

V. CONCLUSIONS 105

Summary 105
Major Findings 106
Conclusions 110
Recommendations of the Study 110
  Conclusion for Recommendation of the Study 115
  Recommendations for Further Study 116

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Responding Institutions 118
Appendix B: Cover Letter and Questionnaire 120
Appendix C: Guidelines and Standards for Malaysian Distance Education Library and Information Services 130
Appendix D: A Librarian-Centred Model for the Development and Implementation of a Support System for Library and Information Services 140

REFERENCES 145
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of Institutions, Number of Library Services and Response Rate</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Year of Establishment of Distance Education Programs and Number of the Students Enrolled that have been Enrolled by Institutions</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Institutions’ View on Providing Library and Information Services to Distance Education Students</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Status of Adopting of Guidelines and Standards by Institutions</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Range of Library Services Provided by the Institutions to the Distance Education Learners</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Different Means of Interlibrary Loan Services to the Distance Education Learners</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Percentage of Institutions Having/Not Having a Written Mission Statement, Goals, Objectives and Policies on the Library Services Provided to Distance Learners</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Percentage of Institutions that Conduct Needs Assessment on Library Resources, Services and Facilities</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Percentage of Institutions having Resources Sharing or Reciprocal Agreement with other Distance Education Institutions in terms of Library Services</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Institutions that Promote Library Services to the Extended Campus Community</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Special Training on Distance Education Librarianship to Staff who Deliver Library Services</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Institutions Providing Remote Access to Electronic Resources for Distance Learners</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Institutions Incorporating New Developments in Information Technology to Improve Library Services</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Funding for the Development of the Distance Education Programs</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15. The Source of Funding for the Development of the Distance Education Programs
98

Table 16. Protected Fund or a Yearly Budget Plan for Library and Information Services
99

Table 17. The Institution’s Opinion on whether Government Should adopt a National Policy to Develop a Network of Public Libraries for Distance Learners 102
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Source of Literature on Library Support for Distance Education 27
Figure 2. Percentage of Student Distribution by Institution 77
Figure 3. Percentage of Institutions adopting Guideline and Standards of Library and Information Services for their Distance Learning Programs 80
Figure 4. The Institutions' View on the Necessity to Establish Guideline and Standard for Distance Education Services in Malaysia 81
Figure 5. Percentage of the Means of Requesting Library and Information Services by Distance Learners 83
Figure 6. Percentage of the Means of Requesting Reference Assistance Services by Distance Learners 84
Figure 7. The Collaborative Relationship between the Librarian and Distance Educator 88
Figure 8. The Institutions' View on the Need for Academic, Public and Special Libraries to Work Together to Support Distance Learners 89
Figure 9. Category of Staff Engaged for the Extended Campus Library Services 92
Figure 10. Type of Remote Access to Electronic Resources for Distance Learners 94
Figure 11. Level of Training Given to Distance Learners forEffective Use of the Electronic Information Resources 96
Figure 12. The Co-ordinator's Evaluation of their Performance in Providing Library Support and Services to their Distance Learners 100
Figure 13. The Problems that Affect the Provision of Library Support and Services to Distance Learners 101
Figure 14. The Institution's Opinion on Implementing Electronic Library/Virtual Library Services on the Net to Distance Learners 103
Figure 15. The Framework of Librarian-Centred Model 142
Figure 16. The Planning Process of a Librarian-Centred Model 143