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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

by

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ABSTRACT

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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.

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