Chapter III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses the questionnaire survey research method.


"Within librarianship, survey research methods are the most suitable techniques presently available with which to discern:

1. The amount of public information about a library’s collection or services.
2. The kinds of information needed by library users and nonusers, as well as the sources on which people most commonly rely (books, periodicals, newspapers, radio, television, etc.).
3. Attitudes and opinions of librarians about their profession (status, practices, standards, and policies)"

This survey will provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the current status and role of the library in Distance Education to support distance learners in Malaysia?
2. What is the perspective of the Distance Education Library and Information Services to the faculty?
3. Do the institutions participating in Distance Education programs in Malaysia provide library and information services for distance learners? If so, what services are available and how are they classified?
4. What are the standards and guidelines that are being used for the delivery of library and information services to Distance Education programs?
5. Is there a protected fund or a yearly budget plan for library and information services for the development of Distance Education programs?

6. What are the initiatives of the faculty in using new technologies to provide library support to Distance Education programs? What are the significant application and development of Information Technology in library and information services to distance learners?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In order to accomplish this study, several steps are followed:

1. The study began with a review of the literature through June 1997 for references pertaining to library services for distance education.

2. The nature of the problem suggests the survey approach. The questionnaire was selected as the instrument best suited for the purpose of the investigation.

3. The population for the study is selected based on the nine government-supported universities and colleges (the list provided by the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, on distance education); four newly established private universities; and all private higher educational institutions and training institutions in the Klang Valley (based on the book Education Guide Malaysia, 3rd edition, 1997). In view of the large number of private higher educational institutions and training institutions in the Klang Valley, prior calls were made via telephone to every
institution to check whether they are involved in distance education programs before questionnaires were sent to them.

4. A questionnaire was then developed and presented to a small group as a pilot study. A copy of the final questionnaire, cover letter and follow-up letter is given in Appendix B.

5. At the beginning of January 1998, questionnaires, stamped return-addressed envelopes, and cover letters were mailed to the participating institutions in Malaysia. Another copy of the questionnaire attached with a reminder letter was sent three weeks after the first mailing to the participating institutions if the first questionnaire was not returned by the due date. This is done in order to achieve an adequate response rate. The cut-off date for the final return of the questionnaires was February 15, 1998.

6. The data from the questionnaires were analysed and tabulated. The results and findings are reported in Chapter IV.

SAMPLE

The sample for the study was selected based on the nine government-supported universities and colleges (the list provided by the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, on distance education); four newly established private universities; and all private higher educational institutions and training institutions in the Klang Valley based on the book Education Guide Malaysia, 3rd edition, 1997. The reason for identifying the private higher educational institutions and training institutions in the Klang Valley only is due to the fact that the majority of such tertiary
education institutions is mainly established and clustered in this area which is the main centre of tertiary education in Malaysia. As such the non-inclusion of a small number of private higher educational institutions and training institutions outside of the Klang Valley will not significantly affect the final result of the survey. Those Distance Education programs offered by the universities and private institutions involved in the survey are opened to everyone throughout the country.

The government-supported universities and colleges engaged in distance education programs in Malaysia are:

- Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM)
- Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIA)
- Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
- Universiti Malaya (UM)
- Universiti Sarawak Malaysia
- Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)
- Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
- Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
- Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)

The four newly established private universities are:

- Universiti Telekom Malaysia
- Universiti Petronas Malaysia
- Universiti Tenaga Nasional Malaysia
- Universiti Tun Abdul Razak

In the Klang Valley there are a total of 234 private higher educational institutions and training institutions that made up the sample for this survey.
INSTRUMENTS

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire (Appendix B) contains 2 questions on the institution background and 25 other survey questions. Questions 1 and 2 is an exploration on the philosophical considerations of the institution with respect to the provision of library and information services to its distance learners. Questions 3 and 4 ascertain the models and guidelines that are being used for the delivery of library and information services to distance education programs. The opinions provided will be used as standards and guidelines to provide library and information services to distance learners in Malaysia. These guidelines cover philosophy, objectives, management, collection, finances, personnel, facilities and resources of the library services to distance learners in a Distance Education program. Questions 5 through 8 ask the range and scope of library and information services provided by these institutions to students enrolled in their Distance Education programs. Questions 9 through 14 are concerned with management. The development of a written statement, needs assessment, collaboration between the librarian and distance educator in the curriculum development process and course planning, resource sharing or reciprocal agreement were probed. Questions 15 and 16 concern personnel issues. The personnel's professional skill in management and co-ordination of Distance Education Library and Information Services is determined here as well as training for distance librarianship. Questions 17 through 19 ask about the initiatives of the institution in using information technology (IT) in providing the library and information services to distance learners. Information on the financial arrangement to provide library and information services to distance learners are solicited in questions 20 and 21. Question 22 makes a self-
evaluation of the institution's performance on the provision of library support and services to meet the information needs of their distance learners. Question 23 seeks to identify problems that affect the provision of library support and services in their Distance Education programs. The two final questions elicit the opinion about the necessity for the government to have a national policy to develop a network of public libraries that will function as study centres for distance learners, and the idea regarding implementation of an electronic library/virtual library on the Internet for Distance Education Library and Information Services to distance learners.

THE INTERVIEWS

The interview is only to be conducted if the total response is not adequate, and only for institutions that have failed to return the questionnaires. Owing to the fact that the technique for constructing the questionnaire and the structured interview schedule is quite similar, hence the information collected through the interview is expected to be the same as elicited in the questionnaire. The following is the outline of the structured interview schedule:

1. Information about the participating institution.

2. Philosophical considerations of the institution with respect to the provision of library and information services to its distance learners.

3. The models and guidelines that are being used for the delivery of library and information services to Distance Education programs, and the opinion on establishing a standards and guidelines for library and information services to distance learners in Malaysia for the libraries of a institution with affiliated and extension program.
4. The range and scope of library and information services provided by these institutions to students enrolled in their Distance Education programs.

5. The management concerns about
   a. Written statement
   b. Need assessment
   c. Collaboration relationship between the librarian and distance educator in the curriculum development process and course planning
   d. Resource sharing or reciprocal agreement.

6. To determine the personnel's professional skill in management, the coordination of Distance Education Library and Information Services and the training for distance librarianship.

7. Initiative of the institution in using information technology to provide library and information services to distance learners in Distance Education programs.

8. Funding

9. The evaluation of the institution's performance regarding the provision of library support and services to meet the information needs of their distance learners.

10. To identify the problems that affect the provision of library support and services in Distance Education programs.

11. The opinion on
   a. The need by the government to establish a national policy to develop a network of public libraries that will function as study centres for distance learners.
b. Whether the Distance Education institutions should implement an electronic library/virtual library on the Internet/Web for Distance Education Library and Information Services to distance learners.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Each set of questionnaire was completed by the co-ordinator of the distance education program of the participating institutions. The data from completed questionnaires are coded manually into analysis sheets. Data derived from the questionnaires were collated, enumerated and presented in tables, figures and narrative. The results and presentation of analytical data are presented in Chapter IV.