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THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON THE LIBRARY: USAGE PATTERNS AND PERCEPTIONS OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

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ABSTRACT

The Internet is an important component in the digital revolution in libraries. However there exists some controversy on whether it is an asset to libraries or it will replace libraries. This study was designed to study the perceptions of a group of library users on whether the library will loose it's ground of existence due to the emergence of the Internet.

A group of 100 postgraduate students at the University of Malaya (UM) were surveyed to determine how they use the Internet, the influence it has on their research, and their perceptions of the Internet on the library. Fourteen library professionals from the UM Library were also interviewed to determine their perceptions on the changes the Internet may produce in the role of libraries and the librarians.

The findings of this study revealed that the Internet would produce some changes in the areas of information transfer, services and human resources of the library. There will be less emphasis on print media, but remote access and exchange of data will be a prominent feature of the library. In addition human resources will be relocated to new areas of work since electronic material need no handling like the print ones.

The study concluded that postgraduate students at the University of Malaya believe that the Internet will not substitute the library as a physical entity, but is likely to supplement the role of the library for better information services.