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

Abdalla Barakat Elbakhiet

A Research Project submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Master of Library and Information Sciences (MLIS)
at the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology
University of Malaya

1998
## CONTENTS

List of Tables v

Acknowledgements vii

Abstract viii

Chapter Page

1. INTRODUCTION
   
   Background to the Study 1
   
   Statement of the Problem 2
   
   Aims of the Study 3
   
   Research Questions 4
   
   Significance of the Study 4
   
   Limitations 6
   
   Definitions 6
   
   Organization of the Report 8

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE
   
   Approach to the Review of Literature 9
   
   Arguments for the Internet 10
   
   Arguments for the Library 17

3. METHODOLOGY
   
   Pilot Study 22
   
   The Population and Sample 23
Instruments 24
Data Analysis Techniques 25

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Patterns of Respondents 26
Usage of Library by Respondents 28
Use of the Internet 28
Patterns of Use of the Internet 32
Assistance from the University Library with the Internet 43
Changes in the Role of Library 46
Perceptions of Librarians 52

5. MAJOR FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Major Findings 58
Recommendations 63
Conclusions 65

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire 66
Appendix 2: Interview questions 73

REFERENCES 75
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rate of Responses by Faculty</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level of Study of Respondents</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use of the Internet for Research Purposes</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Frequency of Use of Library per Day</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Major Information Sources</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Relationship between Students' Faculties and Information Source Used</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Methods of Learning to Use the Internet</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Internet Services Used</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Internet Services Used by Faculties</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Times of Using the Internet during the Day</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Places where Postgraduate Students Primarily Used the Internet</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Factors to Determine Internet Information Quality</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Factors to Determine Information Quality by Faculty</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The Influence of the Internet on Research</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Forms of Influence of Internet on Students' Research</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Problems Encountered when Using the Internet</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Assistance from the Library</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Types of Assistance from the Library</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Availability of Librarians during Training Sessions</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Availability of Librarians after Training Sessions</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Satisfaction with Assistance Provided by Librarians</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Seeking Help from Librarians to determine Quality of Information</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Expected Role of the Library in IT Era</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
24. Expected Role of the Library by Faculty  48
25. Role of Librarian  49
26. Preferred Resources for Research  50
27. Perceptions if the Internet will Replace the Library  51
28. Perceptions of Students about the Future of the Library by Faculty  51
29. Activities Carried Out by Librarians via Internet  53
30. Some Expected Changes due to the Internet  54
31. Role of Librarians in Relation to the Internet  55
32. Increasing Efficiency in the Library  56
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Diljit Singh, for his valuable advice and guidance during the writing up of the research. I also wish to thank him for his patience and encouragement during the coursework and research.

Special thanks go to postgraduate students at the University of Malaya who participated in the research. This study would not have been possible without their assistance.

A word of thanks is also extended to Dr. Zaiton Osman, Chief Librarian at the University of Malaya Library, for granting me permission to interview some of the library’s staff. Special thanks also go to the UM Library staff members who agreed to give up some of their valuable time to share their views and experiences with me.

Finally, I wish to thank Mrs. Koh Swee Neo, the programmer at the MLIS Computer Laboratory, for her help and advise during the preparation of this report.
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 lose its 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.