

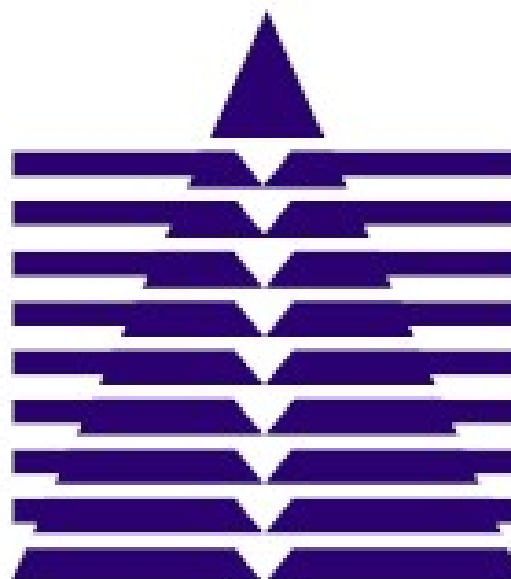
**USE OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES AMONG THE USERS OF
PENANG PUBLIC LIBRARY CORPORATION**

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Abstrak

Public libr... services. C... resources provided b... group relie... (43.2%). T... and colleg... the profes... Internet w... search in :... The usage... databases promote th...



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1. INTF

1.1 Wha

Libraries to c... information, manage and disseminate information and knowledge which can contribute in achieving a knowledge-rich society in any country.

As the twentieth-first century begins, it has turned libraries and information centers into new institutions with the growth in the electronic dissemination of information. This trend is likely to help libraries continue existing as in the past. However, the basic purpose of libraries to organize and disseminate information is now needed more than ever. Moreover, with the widespread availability and use of electronic information,

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Based on the definition above, libraries were generally divided into five major categories; National Libraries, Academic Libraries, Public Libraries, Special Libraries and School Libraries. The five types of libraries mentioned are only the primary kinds. Each library has its general roles and a specific group of customers to serve.

1.3 Public libraries roles

Providing access to knowledge in a variety of formats to support formal and informal

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education has been the basis in the foundation and maintenance of most public libraries and remains the core purpose of the public library. Today, the public libraries in Malaysia often function as local centers for making knowledge and information readily available to the general public through its main library, district libraries, branch libraries, town libraries, mobile libraries, village libraries and reading rooms

1.4 The Penang Public Library Corporation

The Penang Public Library Corporation currently has its headquarters in Seberang Jaya, Perai (mainland) and its branches in George Town, Balik Pulau, Bukit Mertajam and Jawi. The corporation also has its own Children's Library in Jalan Scotland, Penang, and 1 township library in Bagan Ajam, 2 libraries at shopping mall in KOMTAR and Bayan Baru, 51 village/community cyber libraries and 10 mobile libraries. All these libraries are well distributed all over the island and the mainland. The library network is widespread and located not only in the urban areas but also in the remote villages, thus establishing a network of information services among the public. According to Penang Public Library Corporation, it has made a paradigm shift by developing all its libraries as electronic libraries (being the first public library in Malaysia to have linkages to all its libraries), taking advantage of the enabling technologies, creating a single, integrated virtual library. The aim is to make global intellectual knowledge readily available online to the general public through its 69 service points.

The objective of the paper is to highlight the usage and effectiveness of electronic information resources offered by the Penang Public Library.

It is clear that electronic information resources provided by the Penang Public Library Corporation play an important role to the communities. The library has visualized and

strategized its mission and vision to create new services in line with the advancement of the technology. However, little is known on how the electronic information resources are being utilized in meeting the needs of the public user.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a multi-method approach to collect data; including a printed questionnaire survey, group interview, observations, and examination of documents.

2.1 Questionnaire

A total of 200 forms have been distributed to users of Penang Public Library Corporation who visited the Cyber Cafe, OPAC Section and Electronic Journal Section. Majority (60.4%) of the respondents were professionals, college, school and university students.

2.2 Observations

Two sessions were conducted and the main objective is to gain the pattern of EIRs usage among the users. A total of 75 users were observed on 8th January and 19th February 2005. Observation among the users using OPAC was conducted to obtain information and to investigate the following aspects:

1. Which group (younger or older) uses the EIRs most
2. The amount of time spent accessing information at each section
3. Whom did they ask for help and
4. Which section of the library is the most popular

2.3 Group Interview

The target groups were selected based on regularly users who visit the EIRs section .They were selected mainly because as regular users they can express ideas and

give some comments and also suggestions on the effectiveness of the EIRs services provided by the library. Eight participants were selected for the discussions. They were first asked some introductory questions, aiming to get some general information. Later, they were asked to give comments and suggestions on aspects which were related to the usage of EIRs. The interview took about 1 ½ hours.

2.4 Examination of Documents

Documents related to the usage of EIRs; namely Internet and Online Databases were examined and analyzed.

The table above showed that the younger group uses EIRs more than the older group. This is seen in the first two groups of 13 – 29 years with a total of 79 respondents who used EIRs, compared to those of the age 30 and above where only 29 respondents used EIRs. This is also supported from the observations done on 8th January and 19th February 2005 between 10.15am - 4.30pm, where it was observed that there were 51 younger group users used EIRs compared to 14 older users.

An examination of the usage forms also indicated a similar trend, as shown in Table 3.2 below.

3. Findings

3.1 Usage of Electronic Information Resources (EIRs)

3.1.1 EIRs usage among PPLC Library Users

One of the main objectives of this survey was to investigate the EIR usage of the PPLC library users. Based on the respondents feedback, 108 (66.7%) of the respondents indicated that they used EIRs and only 54 (33.3%) did not use EIRs provided by the library. A cross tabulation of use of EIRs against age group is shown in Table 3.1 below.

Age Group	Use of electronic resources		Total
	Yes	No	
13-19 years	29	10	39
20-29 years	50	26	76
30-39 years	19	14	33
40-49 years	8	3	11
55-59 years	1	1	2
60 and above	1	0	1
Total	108	54	162

Table 3.1: Cross Tabulation of Age group and Use of EIRs
(n=108)

Group	Internet	CD-ROMs	Online Databases
Younger Group	24	-	2
Older Group	4	-	-

Table 3.2: Usage of Internet, CD-ROMs and Online Databases
(n=30)

Thus it can be inferred that the younger library users use electronic information resources more than older users.

3.1.2 Types of EIRs used

Users were asked the types of EIRs used. The responses are shown in Table 3.3 below.

Types of EIRs used				
Internet	OPAC	CD-ROMs	Online Databases	Electronic Journals
88 (54.3%)	68 (42%)	13 (8%)	26 (16%)	26 (16%)

Table 3.3: Types of EIRs used

From the table above, it was observed that Internet and OPAC had the highest users, with 88 (54.3%) respondents and 68 (42%) respondents respectively, while only 13 (8%) said they used CD-ROMs. This suggests that Internet and OPAC were utilized more by the PPLC users. However, it is interesting to note that all EIRs provided by PPLC are being used by the users. The findings showed that the usage positively matches the PPLC mission to ensure citizens of Penang enjoy the opportunities of various hi-tech services parallel to the state's expansion and development program.

3.1.3 Purpose of using Internet

Their main purpose of using the Internet, as shown in Table 3.4, was to search for information as reported by 37% of the respondents.

Table 3.4: Purpose of Using Internet
(n=162)

Purpose of using Internet						
Info Searching	Browsing WWW	e-mail	Chatting	Assignment	Games	Others: Download software
60 (37%)	38 (23.5%)	45 (27.8%)	19 (11.7%)	18 (11.1%)	6 (3.7%)	1 (0.6%)

This finding is also supported by (Al-Haddabi, 2004) who noted that 58.4% postgraduate's students preferred to use Internet for their information searching.

However, from the group interview, nearly all participants reported that they used Internet to look up for information to do their assignments.

3.1.4 Usage of OPAC

The usage of OPAC by the respondents can be seen in Table 3.5 below, which showed that 66.0% of the respondents, representing 66.7% of the EIR users, used the OPAC.

Table 3.5: Usage of OPAC
(n=162)

OPAC	Frequency	Percent
Yes	70	43.2
No	37	22.8
Total	107	66.0
NA	55	34.0
Total	162	100.0

Table 3.6: Searching method
(n=162)

Searching Method	Frequency	Percent
Search by title	39	24.1
Search by author	13	8.0
Search by keyword	10	6.2
Search by subject	8	4.9
Total	70	43.2
NA	92	56.8
Total	162	100.0

As can be seen from Table 3.6, out of 70 respondents (43.2%) who used OPAC, 39 respondents (24.1%) searched by title. This suggests that users primarily searched for resources by title. This may be due to users being more familiar with the title than other search approaches. It may also be that they remembered the title better than an author. The low use of searching by keywords is surprising.

3.2 Reasons for not using EIRs

The reasons as to why respondents were not using EIRs services in PPLC.

54 respondents (33.3%) did not use EIRs provided by the PPLC. The reasons given by 22 respondents (13.8%) were that they did not need EIRs, 12 respondents (7.4%) did not know how to use them, 11 respondents

(6.8%) said that they never heard of any and it was complicated and difficult to use.

3.3 Users' suggestions on how to improve EIRs services provided by PPLC

This section gathered the respondents' opinions on how to improve EIRs services provided by PPLC. A total of 64 (60.5%) respondent gave their suggestions. Those suggestions can be categorized as follows:

1. To add computers in the Internet Section and speed up the connections
2. To add OPAC terminals
3. Maintenance of the computers need to be look into
4. Need staff to assist the users
5. Need user education program
6. Promote the services provided
7. Reduce charges or provide free service of the Internet

3.4 Summary of the Findings

The analysis of the data led to the followings findings:

1. All EIRs provided by PPLC are being used by the users and it positively matches the PPLC's mission.
2. Younger age group rely more on the EIRs.
3. Internet is the most popular EIRs used and this is followed by OPAC. However the usage of CD-ROMs, Online databases and Electronic Journals has not been fully utilized by majority of the respondents due to lack of awareness and effective promotions by the library.
4. Reasons for not using EIRs included being unaware of the services, not needing the electronic resources, and not knowing how to use.
5. Library users requested guidance from the librarian and effective training programmes to help them in using the EIRs efficiently.

4. Discussion

4.1 Reasons for not using EIRs

Based on the findings that 7.4% of the respondents 'don't know how to use', there is a possibility that they did not obtain the professional library help they need or they were reluctant to approach the librarian for assistance. In this case the library needs to improve the training program. The library also needs to do marketing and promotion for the EIRs services provided, because it was clearly stated that 6.8% of the respondents answered 'never heard' about the services. In this case the library needs to take a more aggressive approach to market the EIRs. Beside that, 6.8% of the respondents stated that they did not use EIRs because it was 'complicated and difficult to use.' In this situation PPLC should set some strategies to provide training or individual user assistance to some potential users.

However, 13.8% of the respondents said that they did not need EIRs. This may be because they did not know the advantages of EIRs. It is important to note that according to the Public Library Service, IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development (2001), the public library should help its users develop skills that will enable them to make the most effective use of the library's resources and services.

4.2 New roles of the Librarians

Through the observations, it was found out that lack of efficiency of the librarian somehow had led to the low usage of the EIRs. The librarian seemed to neglect the needs of the users, by not attending the users when they faced problem of accessing the EIRs services. This may be due to the fact that PPLC did not have enough staff to attend all the users, or the librarians were bogged down by their heavy workload. The

request for guidance and assistance, as suggested by the respondents also justifies this observation.

Nowadays, with the great variety of electronic resources offered by the library, librarians are often seen as electronic-resources expert. PPLC should emphasize on enhancing the role of reference librarian and training of library users for EIRs use should be a high priority. In fact the users need more guidance in using electronic resources than they did in using a library of print materials. Reference librarian should play an important role in advising and recommending these electronic resources that are available in the library and help the users in using them at the point of enquiry and information need. The librarian must develop and maintain a good knowledge of the content and scope of each resource.

5. Conclusion

The overall findings of this study revealed that the users at Penang Public Library Corporation used EIRs and the younger

group used more of the EIRs services. However it is interesting to note that the age group of 60 and above also used the EIRs services provided by the library. Through these findings it also indicated that the users used EIRs according to their preference and accessibility of the EIRs. Internet and OPAC were seen to be the preferred EIRs. In order to increase the usage of other EIRs, PPLC needs to promote and improve the training programme so as to create awareness of their benefits. Through the suggestions given by users, PPLC should actively guide the users in recommending the resources and help the users in using the electronic resources. The findings also stated that there were users at PPLC who did not use EIRs services. Given this scenario, PPLC needs to plan in term of minimizing the percentage of non-users of EIRs. It was found that all EIRs facilities provided by the library were being used by the users at different levels. It is hoped that the findings will be useful to the PPLC and that the study has made a contribution to the body of knowledge on the use of electronic information resources.

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