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MyUniNet : ITS CONTRIBUTION IN RESOURCE SHARING AND LIBRARY NETWORKING IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Persidangan Perpustakaan Universiti dan Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PERPUN) is a forum of cooperation among the Heads of public universities and government-linked universities and the Director General, National Library of Malaysia. **Malaysian University Libraries & National Library Network (MyUniNet)** is the official name for PERPUN portal which is accessible at <http://perpun.upm.edu.my/>. MyUniNet portal symbolises the cooperation and smart partnership between PERPUN members. The development of the portal illustrates the commitment of PERPUN in providing scholarly information resources via a single access. The portal offers access to MyTO which lists the theses collection in all public and selected private university libraries and MyULIS which lists titles of all serial publications subscribed by the libraries. MyULIS is one of the reference sources to get information and materials through interlibrary loan services (ILL). PERPUN has moved a step forward by providing services in digital resources and content. The purpose of this paper is to describe the initiatives taken by all university libraries in expanding and optimizing the use of digital resources and content in research, and resource sharing among the universities. The data for this study will be collected through questionnaire, interviews and author's personal experiences and observations. The study will also focus on the role of two Special Interest Groups; Malaysian Information System Librarians (MySyL) and Malaysian Online E-Resources Consortium (MOLEC) in the development and the implementation of MyUniNet Portal.

Keywords: Resource Sharing, Library Networking, Academic Library, Digital Library Management, Information Technology Application.

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Persidangan Perpustakaan Universiti dan Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PERPUN) is a forum of cooperation among the Heads of public universities and government-linked universities and the Director General, National Library of Malaysia. The members of PERPUN are National Library of Malaysia (PNM); 20 Higher Educational Institutions in Malaysia; and government-linked universities such Multimedia University (MMU), Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP), Open University Malaysia (OUM), Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL).

Since 2005, PERPUN has actively carried out a number of projects which benefits Malaysian students and scholars. Among the projects are Malaysian Theses Online (MyTO), E-Repository, Malaysian Gateway to the Internet Resources, Malaysian Union List of Serials (MyULIS). **Malaysian University Libraries & National Library Network (MyUniNet)** is the official name for PERPUN portal which is accessible at <http://perpun.upm.edu.my/>. MyUniNet portal symbolises the cooperation and smart partnership between PERPUN members. The development of the portal illustrates the commitment of PERPUN in providing scholarly information resources via a single access. The portal offers access to MyTO which lists the theses collection in all public and selected private university libraries and MyULIS which lists titles of all serial publications subscribed by the libraries. MyULIS is one of the reference sources to get information and materials through interlibrary loan services (ILL). There are two Special Interest Groups (SIG) involved in the development and the implementation of MyUniNet Portal; Malaysian Information System Librarians (MySyL) and Malaysian Online E-Resources Consortium (MOLEC). These two SIGs members are responsible on the content of MyUniNet portal.

Statements of the Problem and Aim of the Study

This study attempts to gather information about MyUniNet portal. There are some people does not aware of the existence of MyUniNet portal. What is the significance of this portal in the sharing of information and library networking? It is to describe the initiatives taken by PERPUN in expanding and optimizing the use of digital resources and content in research and resource sharing among the universities. The results of this study can be as a guide and reference to the PERPUN as they seek to improve the quality of MyUniNet portal in giving services to the community.

Objective of the Study

1. To identify the functions and the main aim of MyUniNet built.
2. To identify the roles and responsibilities of SIG members.
3. To examine the suitability of the portal used as a tool for finding information.
4. To discover the challenges and impacts of MyUniNet built.
5. To identify the perceptions about MyUniNet among SIG members.

Significance of Study

The significance of the study was to identify the involvement and cooperation between the librarians at the Academic Library regarding Research in Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia. The results of this study can be used as a measurement and benchmarking in providing better facilities to consumer in terms of information sharing and library networking among academic libraries. This study only covers the content digital resources which do not affect all the operations on technical and systems requirement. The scope also is on how MyULIS and MyTO help users as an information searching tools.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature Review

It seems digital age has arrived and affected most of the service organizations especially libraries as information provider.

Resource sharing and library networking

Resource sharing has always been essential to the existence of libraries. Educating and entertaining patrons through the dissemination of the library's resources is what libraries are all about and part of the reason why most of us have been hired. At the most basic level, resource sharing means opening the library doors to patrons who walk in the doors and are given the privilege of reading the items inside. Extending this sharing responsibility apart than the library building involves sharing library resources with the patrons of other libraries (Blakes, 2006).

In the present digital age, resource sharing according to Amigos Library Services (1995) "is comprised of transactions which a library makes its materials or copies of its materials available to the clientele of another library upon request." This is intended to meet the needs of customers who require materials not in the library. This is where the importance of the relationship between libraries in supplying the materials. The purpose is to obtain, upon request of a library's primary user, materials not available in the local library.

Resources sharing, according to Kent (1978), denote a mode of operation whereby the library functions are shared in common by a number of libraries. This is to ensure that the main purpose is achieved in an effective information sharing that is able to provide greater access to materials and facilities to the users as well as being cost effective than spending at their own.

Resource sharing is can be said to be “library co-operation”. It involves effort at sharing facilities as well as commitments, and in extending and improving things without proportionate increase in cost of processing facilities including books, journals, equipment, etc. This digital age, library resource sharing is enhanced according to Rahman and Kumar (2000) by “the technological development in the field of information technology and telecommunication which have paved the way to form local, regional and international networking of libraries to share their resources.”

Maigari (1991), highlighted the benefits accrued to institutions with networks of resources sharing as follows: 1. There would be better and wider knowledge and effective use of their resources; 2. The resources of the participating institutions supplement each other; 3. Some services, which could not be undertaken by one library, due to some limitations like finance, personnel etc.; 4. Information retrieval to users is done faster; 5. Such an arrangement facilitates global information and data flow; and 6. It adds to the general improvement and development of personnel of participating libraries. All benefits have meant by Maigari is very positive and a lot of evidence in the present situation. This benefits not only to the user or library involved, but it also has a powerful impact on the image of PERPUN which always ensure continuous and quality of these activities are monitored.

In Malaysian environment, cooperation between libraries is still new even though PERPUN was formed in a few years ago. Nowadays Malaysian librarian has acknowledged their roles as information personnel has increased not only make them visible but also their products/ collection.

Besides that, resource sharing in the digital era is beneficial to participating libraries in the following ways:-

1. Access to information, freedom of expression and opinion and universal library and lifelong learning (Thapisa 2000).

2. Efficiency of library services, easy acquisition of information with low cost and improvement on in-house operations of libraries.
3. To advance the use and usability of globally distributed, networked information resources (Okebukola, 2002).

These shows that the available ICT facilities in the libraries studied are not adequate in number and for digital or electronic library operations needed as backbone for digital age resource sharing.

Activities of resources sharing in a digital age

SIG of Malaysian Online E-Resources Consortium as MOLEC should be able to discuss and make an alliance in the purchasing or subscribing to certain journals database by each particular library. Therefore, the libraries involved can focus and be able to huge savings for other libraries because they only subscribe to a specific collection. For libraries that do not subscribe, they will be provided with access partnership in which the occurrence of inter-library loan or document supply by e-mail. In the modern approach of resource sharing, the following activities take the center stage were some been suggested by Speirs (2006): i. Creation of cross-database and abstracting and indexing (A&I) databases; ii. Document Delivery; and iii. Formation of Library Consortium. The objective of formation of library consortium is to expand access for students to develop a model to analyze journal pricing and to affect a substantial degree of cost containment through collaboration.

Models of library cooperation

There are a few more efforts and example can be seen as to benchmarking or improvements in the methods of information sharing in cooperation between libraries. In a study a few years ago, Sinclair (1973) proposed four useful models of cooperative activity among libraries, and has been used as a guide

and is still valid today in the electronic revolution. The four models are: Bi-nodal partnership; Multi-nodal partnership; Service partnership; and Outsourcing partnership.

In this study, MyUniNet is using the service partnership which is using one of the Sinclair model. In MyUniNet construction, both SIG in PERPUN serves to provide a number of outputs in the form of linkages. The partnership has provided links to the MyTO and MyULIS and made available to PERPUN members. Each SIG is involved in the preparation and data inputting which supervised by UPM Library as a facilitating node or manager of the output. But until now there are some weaknesses which can be seen for the improvement of other viewpoints or other organization.

METHODOLOGY

Research Method

In this chapter described the research method to achieve the study objectives. The first section focused on method used to collect data to achieve the objective's study including questionnaire design, survey, interviews, sampling method and the final section outlines the procedures and analyzes data.

This study will result both the quantitative and qualitative analysis results. The primary data of the study will be collected by using quantitative method. An online questionnaire is carefully prepared and distributed to a sample of users. Quotes from interviews are reported, showing feelings and observations.

Research Design, Population and Sample

A case study was used as a research technique to expand on the results of the survey by gaining in-depth information in 26 members of PERPUN. After having identified the population to be researched that are 1) MySyL – 26; 2) MOLEC – 26; and 3) Web Master – 1 which the sample making a total of 53 respondents. Purposive sampling is the only option for this study. Considering the possibility and usefulness the number of data collection, the on-line survey was decided would be the best method to use, user will be informed by phone and link given through their e-mail to answered the questionnaire.

To get higher viability of data collections, the personal contact is the best approaching method to get the higher response rate. But it is discovered that the method was not suitable for securing attitudes and other personal information. The respondent afforded more privacy and enough time via on-line questionnaire. Interviews are handling by only selected respondents to get

the personal in-depth feelings and perceptions to support the questionnaire findings. The interviews being approach and controls are by phone.

Data Analysis Procedures

After all the data collected, it was coded and entered into a database that is after the mistaken were corrected by checked with the original questionnaire. The attitude scales were examined to determine their reliability. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 18.0.

Descriptive analysis using frequencies were used to examine the respondent's socio-demographic and experience on MyUniNet portal. In order to analysis the functionality of the portal that related to the objective study, descriptive analysis using mean value and frequencies that using percentage were used in the study. Descriptive analysis also uses as qualitative findings by using quotes of the respondents.

FINDINGS

The respondents in this study involved 22 people out 53 which 31 people were been transferred to other division, absences because of attending seminars, medical leaves, emergency leaves and maternity leaves. From the 22 respondents which is divided into two groups: 11 (50%) female and 11 (50%) male MySyL and MOLEC SIG members in PERPUN were responded to the questionnaire given.

Topics of Preference

Table 1 show that 6 of the respondents are aged 25-30 years which represents 27.3%. 10 of the respondents are aged 31-35 years which represents 45.5%,

and there are 2 of the respondents for each group of aged 36-40 years, 41-45 years and 46-50 which represents 9.1%.

Table 1: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25 - 30	6	27.3	27.3	27.3
	31 - 35	10	45.5	45.5	72.7
	36 - 40	2	9.1	9.1	81.8
	41 - 45	2	9.1	9.1	90.9
	46 - 50	2	9.1	9.1	100.0
Total		22	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that 13 of the respondents' holds Bachelor's Degree which represents 59.1%, and 9 of the respondents are Master's Degree holders which represent 40.9%.

Table 2: Education Background

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor's Degree	13	59.1	59.1	59.1
	Master's Degree	9	40.9	40.9	100.0
Total		22	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 show that 5 of the respondents have working experience 1-5 years, 2 of the respondents have working experience 11-15 years, 11 of the respondents have working experience 6-10 years, 3 of the respondents have working experience 16-20 years, and 1 of the respondents have working experience 26-35 years.

Table 3: Working Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 - 5 years	5	22.7	22.7	22.7
	6 - 10 years	11	50.0	50.0	72.7

11 - 15 years	2	9.1	9.1	81.8
16 -20 years	3	13.6	13.6	95.5
26 - 35 years	1	4.5	4.5	100.0
Total	22	100.0	100.0	

The results of analysis done is showed in Table 4 shows that 8 of the respondents are MOLEC members which represents 36.4%, and 14 of the respondents are MySyL which represent 63.6%.

Table 4: SIG Members

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	MOLEC	8	36.4	36.4	36.4
	MySyL	14	63.6	63.6	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

Research Findings based on the objectives

The results of analysis done are showed in Table 6 SIG members' perceptions about MyUniNet. This finding is to identify the functions and the main aim of MyUniNet built which is one of the objectives of the study. MyUniNet is really useful and important to Scholars stated the highest scores (mean = 3.95, standard deviation =.486) for the most, meanwhile, MyUniNet existence is well known to the user (mean = 2.86, standard deviation = .710) was the less of main aim of MyUniNet built that SIG members perceived.

Tble 6: Perceptions about MyUniNet

Main aim of MyUniNet built	Score Percentage					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
MyUniNet is really useful and important to Scholars.	-	-	13.6	77.3	9.1	3.95	.486

MyUniNet is suitable as a search engine.	-	-	40.9	50.0	9.1	3.68	.646
MyUniNet is suitable for research and learning activities.	-	-	18.2	77.3	4.5	3.86	.468
MyUniNet existence is well known to the user.	-	31.8	50.0	18.2	-	2.86	.710
MyUniNet functionality does meet users' needs and requirements.	-	9.1	45.5	45.5	-	3.36	.658
Users do use MyUniNet to search for information.	-	13.6	31.8	50.0	4.5	3.45	.800

Table 7 shows the understanding of SIG members on their roles and responsibilities on MyUniNet. This finding is to identify the roles and responsibilities of SIG members. Ensure that MyUniNet portal is frequently updated and functional accordingly stated the highest scores (mean = 4.23, standard deviation = .528) for the most, meanwhile, held meeting and discussion frequently to discuss the current related issues (mean = 3.86, standard deviation = .560) was the less understanding among SIG members on their roles and responsibilities on MyUniNet.

Table 7: Roles and responsibilities of SIG members on MyUniNet

Roles and responsibilities	Score Percentage					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Promoting MyUniNet to the users.	-	-	18.2	72.7	9.1	3.91	.526
Held meeting and discussion frequently to discuss the current related issues.	-	-	22.7	68.2	9.1	3.86	.560
Work closely to formulate and develop the policies and standards.	-	-	-	86.4	13.6	4.14	.351
Work as a team to achieve MyUniNet objective.	-	-	-	81.8	18.2	4.18	.395
Should facilitate the user in using MyUniNet portal.	-	-	4.5	86.4	9.1	4.05	.375
Act as a representative of the university.	-	-	4.5	81.8	13.6	4.09	.426
Ensure that MyUniNet portal is frequently updated and functional accordingly.	-	-	4.5	68.2	27.3	4.23	.528

Table 8 presents the SIG members experiences on MyUniNet based on their perceptions. This finding is to examine the suitability of the portal used as a tool for finding information which is one of the objectives of the study. It is useful for Inter Library Loan activity stated the highest scores (mean = 3.73, standard deviation = .631) for the most, meanwhile, it provides user friendly interface (mean = 3.41, standard deviation = .666) was the less suitability of the portal used as a tool for finding information perceive of respondents.

Table 8: MyUniNet portal experiences

Suitability of the portal used	Score Percentage					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
The functionality of the portal really meets the users' needs and the objectives of its development.	-	4.5	36.4	54.5	4.5	3.59	.666
It provides user friendly interface.	-	4.5	54.5	36.4	4.5	3.41	.666
It is easily used and accessible.	-	-	45.5	50.0	4.5	3.59	.590
It can be one stop centre for sources of information.	-	-	45.5	45.5	9.1	3.64	.658
It is useful for Inter Library Loan activity.	-	4.5	22.7	68.2	4.5	3.73	.631

Table 9 shows the awareness among SIG members on MyUniNet existence. This finding is to discover the challenges and impacts of MyUniNet built. Has caused the librarians to keep a breast with the development of ICT stated the highest scores (mean = 3.86, standard deviation = .468) for the most, meanwhile, has boosted and supported my career path (mean = 3.45, standard deviation = .596) was the less challenges and impacts of MyUniNet built perceived by SIG members.

Table 9: Awareness among SIG members on MyUniNet

Challenges and impacts	Score Percentage					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Has brought more challenges to Academic Librarians.	-	-	27.3	72.7	-	3.73	.456
Has increased the role of Academic Librarians.	-	-	18.2	81.8	-	3.82	.395
Has caused the librarians to keep a breast with the development of ICT.	-	18.2	77.3	4.5	-	3.86	.468
Can be beneficial in Return on Investment (ROI) of the institutions in terms of ranking.	-	-	36.4	63.6	-	3.64	.492
Will facilitate scholars in research and learning activities.	-	-	36.4	63.6	-	3.64	.492
Has boosted and supported my career path.	-	4.5	45.5	50.0	-	3.45	.596
Has caused the librarian to be computer literate.	-	4.5	31.8	63.6	-	3.59	.590

Table 10 shows the overall opinion among SIG members on MyUniNet development. This finding is to identify the perceptions about MyUniNet among SIG members which are one of the objectives of the study. Increased my work load stated the highest scores (mean = 2.73, standard deviation = .935) for the most, meanwhile, not important in my daily job (mean = 2.32, standard deviation = .839) was the less perceptions about MyUniNet among SIG members.

Table 10: Opinion on MyUniNet portal development

Perceptions	Score Percentage					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Irrelevant in today's trend of information searching.	9.1	54.5	18.2	18.2	-	2.45	.912
Not suitable to be used as search engine.	9.1	36.4	45.5	9.1	-	2.55	.800
Increased my work load.	4.5	45.5	22.7	27.3	-	2.73	.935
Increased the stressful and the complicatedness of my job.	4.5	45.5	31.8	18.2	-	2.64	.848
Not important in my daily job.	13.6	50.0	27.3	9.1	-	2.32	.839
Provides the concept of content which is difficult to understand.	9.1	45.5	27.3	18.2	-	2.55	.912
Lack of applications and functionalities.	4.5	50.0	36.4	9.1	-	2.50	.740

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The questionnaires have been distributed to 53 respondents based on the purposive sampling. The results might be bias because of the approach of the respondents. With the emergence of SIG members in PERPUN community it is very good effort that can be commended. However, each body or group must have a structure and hierarchy that can guide in achieving a specific objective. It requires a very strong joint and co-operation when it comes to large organizations. In making an important decision, each relevant factor or element are to be taken into account. Not to forget, regular meetings among SIG members should be more frequently to discuss various issues related to and other than that to look back every initiatives project undertaken to make sure its function properly and achieve each objective or goal of the project.

To face the new era of technology and sophisticated, as librarians we need to be more exposed to external situations that require us to not only dominate the

field, but also the evolving field of ICT in quick time. In the future, it will likely have a lot of efforts and initiatives in develop new applications with the use of new technologies other than computers. We have to accept as clients that we will face in the near future is a more aggressive Gen-Z customers and more demanding in seeking quick information. This is a challenge faced by all service-based organization. Skills are one of the elements essential to every librarian in the future library that more challenging. Career as Librarian today is towards multi-tasking and high personality profession.

Conclusions

The result of the study, found that efforts in sharing and library networking resource still at moderate levels in Malaysia. It depends on the perception and acceptance of each individual in SIG members which is responsible for the realization of a mission and objectives of the body. Likely as a member of SIG, the duties is just as extra work and not the actual jobs that need to be taken seriously and given full attention.

In addition, specific policies and standards should be identified and explained to each member and data enterer. From time to time members of SIG will alternate and it will be difficult for new members if there are no standard or best practices to be followed to resume their duties and responsibilities of the old. This is very important in providing equipment or portal that involve user-oriented based that the development must be of high quality and achieve the requirements and needs of consumers.

Besides that, to realize this initiative as is practice in other countries, we should not follow exactly what other countries do and imitate all the features and their settings. Instead we need to make a more detailed study of the needs of any user of our own environment and attitudes in different ASEAN countries to European countries. Academic Library as a customer relationship

based which should approach their customer through community outreach so that better results can be gain mainly in terms of value. The value of what library can give and supports in research and education activities.

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