Academic Library Outreach Program: Case Study of the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) in the State of Kedah

Nur Amira Eliana Abd Halim and Roziya Bt Abu

**Faculty of Information Management
Universiti Teknologi MARA UiTM
Puncak Perdana Campus,
UiTM Selangor, Malaysia**

ABSTRACT

The notion of an academic library outreach program denotes the efforts uphold by an institution's academic library to serve their academic community, namely; students, academician, researchers and non-academic administrators. However, the theory and the practices of an outreach program in a Malaysian academic library and Malaysian public library tends to be overlapping. The aim of this article is to discover and deliberate on the factors that affect an outreach program in an academic library. In doing so, study result from two Institutes of Teacher Education (IPG) in the State of Kedah is selected.This study adopts a qualitative case study approach with in-depth individual interviews of the leading librarian for each institution, and later the thematic content analysis and cross-case analysis is used throughout this study in order to analyze the data. From the result of the interviews in the two Institutes of Teacher Education (IPG) in the State of Kedah, two most important factors emerge and it is said to be the key factor the affect an academic library outreach programs.This paper is approached from the leading of librarian's perspective for each institution, namely; CS1 and CS2.

Keywords: Outreach program, Academic library, Academic community

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Outreach is often used interchangeably with synonyms such as an extension of service and the phrases, for instance 'service to the disadvantaged' or 'service to the unserved' and 'service to the community' and/or the 'inner-city service'. What many fail to understand is that the modifications in the goals and the type of library service will describe its outreach approach differently, although the interchangeability of terms and the lack of specificity of their definition still remains (Weibel 1982).

The notion of an academic library outreach program refers to the efforts uphold by an institution's academic library to serve their academic community, namely; students, academician, and non-academic administrators. According to Scott Pointon (2009), a public library is different from an academic library because the public library is an institution that serves the community in general. In contrast, academic library does not serve the general public, instead it serves the academic community in higher learning institution, namely; students, academician, and non-academic administrators. The theory of an outreach program in an academic library (Currie, 2011; Judi Li, 2006), mentioned that an academic library should initially focus to reach in-house users namely students and staff academics. This is in aligned with the major distinction of target users, financial and collection in an academic library that is contrasted from a public library.

"Libraries are perfectly positioned to be brokers on campus; we connect people not only with resources and scholarly materials, but also to each other. Libraries bring people together for academic, cultural, creative, and social causes; no one else on campus so completely

fulfills that role. And so it is vital that we try to be visible on campus, not just as salesmen pitching our products, but as participants" (Mathews, 2009).

Nonetheless, in practice, there are countless literatures of information and library sciences field revealed that, an outreach program practices (despite it's a public library or academic library) usually go beyond in-house users, namely public and community members in general (The Association of Library Communications & Outreach Professionals, n.d.).

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

An academic library supports its in-house academic program by providing significant educational information, material and resources, and above all, it is responses to the ever-increasing demands of information and technological matters of the higher learning institution library users. Therefore, the tasks of servicing academic users become more challenging every day. For many academic libraries and librarians, overall functions and services of an academic library are influenced by regularly fulfilling the users' needs and demands on a regular basis (Opoku, 2011). Hence, for many academic libraries and librarians, an outreach program is an excellent tool in assisting them in providing the material and learning resources, to establish a learning and teaching activities to develop information literacy among users, also the support of teaching of library literacy to library users, (Maitaouthong, Tuamsuk, & Tachamanee, 2012).

In addition, Malaysian university academic libraries provide outreach programs to its students. Many of its outreach programs aim to promote the local academic library services and facilities, it is also encompasses of library visits and tours, library briefing and discussion about library facilities and convenience offered by the academic library to users. But most of all, many Malaysian academic library outreach program's objective is to create awareness among users of the academic library procedure. (Universiti Teknologi MARA, 2016).

Nowadays, the development on the World Wide Web make students sometimes fail to understand the roles of libraries and librarians when enter the universities (Riehle and Witt, 2009). They tend to depend heavily to the Google while access and locate the information because they lack information about information literacy and information literacy skills, and this can hinder their development and academic success. Further on, Riehle and Witt (2009) add either they can differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable information while accessing the Google. Hence, the outreach program is crucial because the librarian able to educate the users to come and meet them in the library because they know properly on how to filter the relevant information other than using the Google while accessing the information. For example, the librarian can teach and make the literacy classes such as on how to use the Mendeley, Endnote because the librarian already trained and expert (Tarkus, 2016).

Academic library runs as a support entity of an academic program of a higher learning institution - by providing relevant information and responding to the increasing information demands of users. A previous study by Dennis (2012) and Carter & Seaman (2011) identify that academic outreach program activities are divided into two major categories 1) services and 2) promotion of services. Services categories in an academic library are listed as; (a) library services (b) material and resources (c) physical and network accessibility facilities. Meanwhile, promotion of the services in an academic library covers (a) marketing (b) promotion of these services, resources, and facilities. It is also stated by Carter & Seaman (2011) that in an academic library, an outreach program is a primary goal of all staff members to introduce and market the library services, resources and facilities to all academic user members and the academic community in the institutions. Hence, academic library outreach programs, is important because it encourages the usage of the library resources, material and it helps to promote a positive image of the higher learning institution.

However, for purposes of this article, the author will explore factors that may affect two academic library outreach programs of the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) in the State of Kedah namely; CS1 and CS2.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The term outreach is used frequently in the library and information science literature, however, the definition is not limited to the library setting only. In the literature, outreach tends to be defined by specific activities that handled by librarians to the library users in the library.

Today, academic libraries have initiated different strategies as outreach to promote the services of libraries and to reach new users. The academic libraries gain many opportunities to show their value to a parent organization, if the outreach initiatives have been implemented successfully for library users. One of the outreach activities that been run by the academic library in order to promote the services of libraries and to reach the new users is provide the outreach programs.

In the academic library, the term 'outreach' refers to the academic library effort and program to promote its services and facilities that are being provided to the library users. Further on Dennis (2012); Carter & Seaman (2011) describe an academic library outreach program as the program that serve library users by providing information and resources that available in the library. In addition, the library can promote the library facilities such as Internet access, discussion room, and auditorium room to the library's users. The statement from Dennis (2012); Carter & Seaman (2011) that mentioned about outreach as promoting and marketing have been agreed by Hill (2004) & Block (2000). Hence, the libraries must be proactive in promoting and marketing the services, resources, activities and facilities in order to fulfill the needs and demands of library users.

Meanwhile, Mu (2009) defined that outreach in academic libraries which aims to improve the services that already available and offered in the library to library users. By only implementing successful opportunities, Mu (2009)believed that academic libraries can gain many opportunities to measure their value as an organization. Furthermore, there are three factors that been identifies by Schneider (2003) to consider the outreach such as the needs to express from outside the library, the mission to achieve the objective, or to construct a form of outreach based on a specific problem in the library. Potter (2012) also mentioned that the outreach is a marketing because the librarian should know the ways to promote library services, collections, and spaces that available in the library to the library's users.

3.1 IPG Academic Library Outreach Program

On July 13, 2005, the Malaysian Cabinet approved 27 Teacher Training Colleges in Malaysia to be upgraded to Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) and later in 2011 elevated to a higher education institution with university status known as Institute of Teacher Education (IPG). Currently Institute of Teacher Education (IPG), offers not only diploma and certificate, but also Bachelor of Education graduate credential.

IPG has been mandated to carry out pre-service teacher training program and in service as stipulated in the Malaysia Education Act 1996. Hence IPG is also responsible for planning and monitoring service Teacher Education (KDP) implemented by IPG. Currently, there are 27 IPG operating actively around Malaysia.

The IPG academic library offers varieties of an outreach program to its users (namely students and academician). Some of the most popular outreach programs in the IPG academic library are 1) The Instruction and Service-Based Outreach; such as workshop and library orientation, 2) Just For Fun Outreach; such as '*Library Open Day' and 'Hari Kerjaya'.*

Other that in-house outreach activities, IPG also runs other community and public outreach program, such as partnerships and community-focused outreach; exhibition and program with pre-school student. Out of all these outreach programs, academic library orientation day for new teacher trainee in the campus is an essential outreach program in IPG. In this program, new trainees will be introduced and given information on the function, rules, facilities and services that provided in the IPG academic library, and the new trainees are given the opportunities to meet and greet IPG academic library staff members during the library orientation day (Perpustakaan IPG Kampus Ipoh, 2017 &Pusat Sumber IPG Kampus Perlis, 2013).Besides that, IPG academic library outreach program offers better explanation and practical instruction and service-based outreach, such as Cataloguing and Classification Workshop (The Borneo Post, 2016), international cataloguing standards such as like Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and Library of Congress Subject Heading (LCSH), as well as the latest standard, resource description and access (RDA).

Meanwhile, IPG academic library community outreach program also offers many activities and programs for pre-schoolers around their area. In fact, in many IPG around Malaysia, there is a specific children's corner for pre-school students in the IPG academic library. The corner is known as *'Sudut Kanak-Kanak'*. In the library, the activities such as reading program, clothing programs, coloring competition are run as often as possible. Besides that, the exhibition is one of the other promotional activities that can be used by academic library to attract library users in the library.

An exhibition consists of a variety of content such as posters, books, manuscripts or bibliography that lists the thematic readings recommended by librarians. For example, a departmental exhibition; exhibition of independence, talk activity for a student by teacher. In the library, there are exhibitions that will be organized such as book exhibition and book donation program. Other than introducing the library as one of a place to support learning and research, the program had turned out to be a medium to raise awareness about the facilities and services provided by the library. "Just For Fun" outreach is one of the categories in an academic library that provide the positive feeling and enjoy among the library's users when come to the library. The activities that held is "Hari Kerjaya" or Library Open Day. The aim of "Just For Fun" wishes to introduce about the library and to promote the resource and services in the library to the library's users.

3.2 Aims of Outreach Program

In many situations, an outreach program in a library served with a purpose to 1) offer a service and 2) promote a service. It is also stated by Carter & Seaman, (2011) and Dennis, (2012) that in an academic library, an outreach program is a primary goal of all staff members to introduce and market the library services, resources and facilities to all academic user members and the academic community in the institutions. Hence academic library outreach programs, is important because it encourages the usage of the library resources, material and it helps to promote a positive image of the higher learning institution.

There are many research studies that have been conducted in academic libraries that use their own initiatives to the maximum level to facilitate this program with a variety of activities and events in order to assure the successfulness of the academic library outreach program. And most of these activities and events include both library literacy and information literacy program action. Nonetheless, it is all depending on the needs of their academic library users.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach with in-depth individual interviews as the main data collection method. An in-depth, semi-structured interview involved interviewing the service provider (who is the leading librarian of each institution academic library).

An in-depth, semi-structured interview method was used in the research because the author wanted to get an in-depth understanding of the respondents' perspectives from the phenomenon of the study, which was to explore the factors affecting academic library outreach programs in CS1 and CS2. In addition, it also allowed informants the full freedom of the respondents to express their views in their own terms as many facts and opinions as they wanted. From the interview session, the informal style had been done by the author because the respondents can give their opinion and views, at the same time they were able to explore the factors that will be covered during the conversations between the author and respondents. During the interview session, the respondents were interviewed with a list of questions that prepared earlier during the interview session.

Open-ended question known as a list of the series of interview questions that were used during the interview sessions between the author and respondents. Hence, open-ended questions will allow the respondents to express their views in their own feelings and experience full freedom, rather than using close-ended questions that can be answered in "Yes" or "No" that provide the limited set of possible answers (DiCicco & Crabtrea, 2006). Thus, functions of open-ended question. The technique will allowed the researcher in order to get the better understanding of the research. Basically, the interview session will be conducted by face to face between the author and respondent between 30 minutes to 1 hour and the conversation will be recorded by using audio recording through the participants' permission.

This study approach is chosen because it is more suitable to gain a better understanding in exploring the factors that affecting an academic library outreach program.

The sampling of interviews was purposive sampling because it wishes to explore a deeper perspective of the research, which is to explore the factors that affecting an academic library outreach program in an IPG academic library of the Malaysian Higher Learning Institution. For purposes of this article, the author focused of two academic library outreach program of the IPG in the State of Kedah namely, CS1 and CS2.Two IPG libraries were chosen because from the managerial perspective, the leading of librarian of each institution in CS1 and CS2 provides the varying types of outreach programs to the library's users. Some of them approach different type of management system based on different variations of respondent in the library. Because of that, it will allow the use of multiple-case studies to answer the objective which is to explore the factors that affecting the academic library outreach program in this study. By using multiple-case studies, this study will give the author to see the enhancement about what are the factors that affecting academic library outreach program (for each institution in the study) based on the leading of librarian's perspective.

This can be seen that the leading librarian provides the access to key informants in the field who can help in identifying the information-rich cases in the study, which is to explore the factors that affecting IPG academic library of the Malaysian Higher Learning Institution.

"The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations" (Patton, 2002, p. 230, emphasis in original).

In addition, Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011) mentioned that the purposive involves of identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest.

Nevertheless, data gathered from the interview were analyzed to explore the factors that affecting an academic library outreach program in IPG academic library of the Malaysian Higher Learning Institution. The thematic content analysis and cross-case analysis are used

throughout this study will be derived from the perspective of the leading librarian in order to analyze the data.The author will use the cross-case analysis aims not to make the comparison for each institution, instead it will report only based on the perspective of the leading librarian in order to answer the objective and research question in the research which is to explore the factors that affecting academic library outreach programs of two academic library outreach program of the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) in the State of Kedah namely, CS1 and CS2.

5. FINDING

Upon conducting interviews in CS1 and CS2, two most important factors emerge and it is said to be the key factors that affect an academic library outreach programs. Those factors are: 1) Financial Factor and 2) Staffing Factor. Below are the preliminary discussion on the above factors.

5.1. Financial Factor

Generally, financing has always been a major challenge in many management issues. Apparently, management of an academic library also faced the same problem. Cross-case analysis of CS1 and CS2 highlighted financial sack back as a major challenge that affect the effectiveness of an outreach program. Both institutions (CS1 & CS2), have no fixed budget for any outreach program in their library. Instead, their institution provides them with one-off budget for all activities and programs in their academic library.

> *…. Financial is 100% dependent on budget from IPGM. If there is a budget, the program can be done. As I stated, we haven't fixed set of budget... but we only have one-off budget.. Because if we have yearly budget, we can do management.. Due to this one-off budget, sometimes we have, sometimes none. (Leader of librarian from CS1).*

> *… Because we do not have a budget or financial allocation.. Because there is no yearly financial or budget..because library budget is only one-off. (Leader of librarian from CS2).*

The above situation will further affect the quality and the quantity of programs that an academic library can offer to the users. With a small and tight budgeting, it is difficult of an academic library librarian to plan and engage in a more effective program.

In addition, by having the small and tight budgeting, not only will affect the total of quality and quantity of programs that an academic library can offer to the users, instead the purchasing the collection of materials can be difficult too. This is because the collection of materials either in the printed and electronic format cannot purchase by the organization, if they do not have an enough budget to continue to purchase this collection of materials. Besides that, the subscription of magazines and newspaper also will affect too, if the organization does not have an enough budget because these materials really important to approach library users to enhance the level of their reading and increase the knowledge about the current issues nowadays.

5.2 Staffing Factor

Staffing is crucial in order to manage an outreach program in an academic library. The librarian of CS1 and CS2 highlights that, not only the number of staff members is important, but a qualified staff member will make a lot of difference.

> *... Staff also contributes to factors. But now we have 3 people who are really expert in the library. So, if the 3 people for us to run the program are a bit of a problem.*

Constraints in terms of knowledge factors in the field of library. And what is the factor in terms of efficiency in implementing these outreach programs? So, we have only 3 people in the library (Librarian from CS1).

... Current staff power. If we have enough staff power, program like inviting outside party (school invitations, whether it is on Career Day or Open Day) and secondly, Helps to get knowledge and making library more better if there is enough staff. (Librarian from CS2).

Besides that, the total number of staff in the library should consider as the factors that affecting the outreach program. This can be seen that, if the organization has an enough recruitment staff, the librarian able to develop many outreach programs to the library users. In addition, not only many outreach programs can be developed, however the staff also can make the step to promote and market the services, facilities, and resources that have been provided in the library and make brainstorming about the next plan to enhance and approach the library users to utilize use these services, facilities, and resources in the library, and at the same time the library users are interested to join the outreach programs that been provided in the library.

Both librarians in CS1 and CS2 enlightened that instead of just having an experience, interest and skills of the staff members are also essential. Academic library staff members are expected to have the skill (such as communication skills, promotional and marketing skills) to handle outreach program. To a certain extent, staff members are required to be able to reach out to users from different geographical and educational background.

... Experienced staff is very important to ensure this outreach program. If experienced none, it's hard too. Experienced and skilled. The experienced experienced, but the skilled ones to run the outreach program (Librarian from CS2).

… Experienced staff is really needed to manage this outreach program because sometimes experienced also created interest and also staff can help.. But if there is experienced, but there is no interest, it can make the implementation of an outreach program in academic library more difficult (Librarian from CS1).

An effective recruitment of academic library staff members begins with a strategic understanding of what the organization needs now and what future direction it aims to take. As part of the planning process, the library needs to develop a staffing plan with decision trees. Most importantly, the academic library staffing plan needs to be updated every year or as the conditions of the institutions changes.

6. CONCLUSION

The outreach program has always and will always be the foundation for association between a library and its users. It goes to the extending of services or assistance that beyond current or usual limits that a library can offer. In addition, these efforts can be taken in all different forms, from a simple face-to-face conversation to a workshop or a tour in a library. All this, offers an advantage to the library in reaching their users. In an academic library, an outreach program, works as an advantage to provide the much needed service to academic members, within an institution. It provides a unique opportunity to improve academic library service and image within a serviced groups of individuals. Moreover, it also offers excellent collaboration opportunities amongst institution academic department, plus community leaders, groups and organizations that will enhance overall academic library service.

The overall purpose of this study is to explore the factors affecting IPG academic library outreach program performance. This study offers various advantages in order to improve the body of knowledge of information in order to identify the factors affecting of IPG academic library outreach performance that be currently being offered for to the IPG academic community members. Although the discussion of the findings in this article is limited to only two IPG located in State of Kedah, overall, the findings can be used to assist IPG academic library to review and provide a better and more suitable academic library outreach program in the library.

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