

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF RURAL
LIBRARIES TOWARD THE
DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION
SOCIETY IN MALAYSIA:
A DELPHI TECHNIQUE**

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Information Management

October 2017

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi Mara. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledge as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non academic institution for any degree or qualification.

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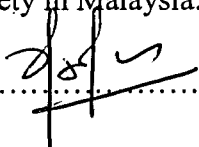
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ABSTRACT

In recent times, the rural libraries' roles have witnessed tremendous changes, especially with the expanding use of the Internet and information demand from the societies. These changes are an issue of the information society. The information society refers to the society which makes extensive use of information and knowledge through the availability of information infrastructures. Information and knowledge are viewed, as a source of development, which enables individuals, communities, and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life. To adequately perform their tasks in light of these forces, rural libraries and rural librarians must identify ways of understanding their changing roles and exploring the factors that support the development of an information society. If rural libraries are to survive in the information society, they must play effective roles as information agents, upgrading their services, while able to communicate the rural information needs. The purpose of this study is to explore the practitioners' interpretation of the contribution of rural libraries, especially their roles in information society development. Another aim of this study was to explore the key enablers that support the rural libraries in the development of an information society. It was also aimed to explain the barriers that may impede the development of an information society. This exploratory study employed a three round Delphi technique using 13 participants who are library and information practitioners and also the policy makers to describe the roles, the key enablers and the barriers of rural libraries in the development of an information society. The study led to the compilation of 27 roles, 41 key enablers and 7 barriers. The findings suggest that the roles of rural libraries were categorized under five main areas: a) provide access to public computing and technologies, b) provide access to information and knowledge, c) promote education and learning, d) support cultural and linguistic diversity and e) support community development. Meanwhile, the key enablers which support the rural libraries in the development of an information society consist of seven main areas. These areas are human capacity, ICT infrastructures, legal-political, physical delivery infrastructures, promotional activities, information content and library budget. The study also described the barriers that impede rural libraries in developing an information society. The main obstacles identified as a library funding, information communication technology, rural library infrastructures, local content resources and human resources. The findings have implications for practitioners to reexamine the roles of rural libraries in the information society and other areas of importance. The identified key enablers could be useful for library management to prioritize the most important areas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I thank Allah s.w.t for giving me the strength to complete this task set before me. I would like to acknowledge my sincere appreciation of my thesis supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Siti Arpah Noordin, and also to my co-supervisor, Dr. Mad Khir Johari Abdullah Sani. Words cannot express how grateful I am for your encouragement, support and excellent during this process. I wish to acknowledge the contributions of the Delphi panel participants in the study. All were unfailingly generous with their time and candid, thoughtful reflections on the success of rural libraries in information society development.

I also wish to thank the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia and University Technology Mara for the financial support I received during my studies. Special thanks go to my friends and colleagues who provided me with moral support and encouragement throughout this long journey. I also acknowledge my mother, Kamaliah Zubairi, and siblings, with love and gratitude for all they have done for me throughout my academic career and my lifetime. Finally, I wish to thank to my husband, Mohd Jasmi Md Piah and my children Haziq, Aqil and Wafiq, who lived with this thesis and throughout the countless hours they remained patient, understanding and supportive. This thesis is also dedicated to the memory of my late supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Sharif Mohd Saad, who shared his knowledge during the initial stages of my study and to the memory of my late father, Shaifuddin B. Mohd Hashim who taught me the importance of higher education in life.

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