

Towards Achieving Quality Services in University Brunei Darussalam Library: Country Report

By *Dr. Haji Suhaimi bin Abdul Karim*
Universiti Brunei Darussalam
Brunei

1. Introduction

The Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) Library was formed to support the teaching, research and learning of the University community. The Library is currently celebrating the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam. It also marked twenty year operations and services of the library to the university. It has been the commitment of the UBD Library to provide excellence library services to the community by emphasizing on quality information services and resources while ensuring financial and administrative accountability. This paper provides an account of the systems that are currently in place at the UBD Library which form the basis for quality information and library services.

2. Management responsibility

Leadership, commitment and active involvement of the university and library top management have been the essential ingredients for the success of UBD in maintaining effective and efficient library operations that has serve the university community for the past twenty years. The important characteristics of the library management are as follows:

- The library operates based on the established vision, policies and strategic objectives consistent with the purpose and mission of the University Library.
- The Chief Librarian is a member of the several University top management committees (Principal Officer Meeting, Senate, Academic Planning Monitoring Human Resource Development, University Strategic Planning Committee)
- Various Committees are set-up at organizational level to maintain, improve and undertake effort for the benefit of the community.
- Establishing and promoting library policies and procedures to ensure consistency of services
- Provide opportunities for the involvement of people at all level to achieve quality through a communication platform.
- Provide a communication platform at all level to relay organizational direction and values through committees and quarterly staff meeting.
- Undertake continuous assessments of services through surveys, comments through suggestion box and faculty board meeting.
- Provisions of management structure responsibility towards the strategic goals of the university Library.

3. Customer Focus

UBD Library is ensuring that all its customer requirements are determined and met with the aim of enhancing satisfactions. These are achieved through the followings:

- Devising a customer service pledge statement
- Addressing request/needs through conventional library services (such as lending (including ILL) and reference) and also value added services (current awareness, external membership facility, etc.) based on established procedures and regulations.
- Identifying new requirements by requesting faculties to assess and prioritize their journal subscriptions.
- Identifying new requirements through distribution of book and journal catalogues from time to time.
- Communicating new resources through out the organization via e-mail, publication, internal mail.
- Continually focusing on process improvement to ensure value for the identified interested parties through feedback and provision of resources.
- Identifying new requirements through university formal forums and meeting (APMC, SENATE, Faculty Boards).
- Communicating new product information through seminar, workshop, email and library publications.
- Establishing good rapport and understanding with suppliers and vendors locally and internationally (provide user profile).
- Continuously identifying the current and impact of producing products or processes or change management.
- Consistently aware of the statutory and regulatory requirement that apply to the information provision (Copyright and Intellectual Property Right, Censorship, Brunei Secrecy Act).
- Cleanliness of the library is constantly maintained through contract cleaners.

4. Policy and procedures

UBD library functions and operations are governed by written policies and procedures which had approved by Committees at institutional and divisional level. Among the established Policy and Procedures are as follows:

- Terms and Reference of Library Committee (Library Statutes),
- Work Procedure Manual,
- Clients/Customers Services Charter,
- Library Lending and Membership Policy,
- Collection Development Policy,

- Bruneiana Collection Policy,
- Inter-library Loan Policy,
- Human Resource Development Policy.

The Library is currently working on its IT Policy, Information Access Policy and the Cataloguing Policy.

Review of policies and procedures are undertaken as need arises.

5. Planning

The current library strategic objectives are spell out in the University 10 year Plan 2001-2010 Paper which is currently under review. Among the emphasis of this Plan are as follows:

- Instilling knowledge/information skills among UBD students and promoting life long learning;
- Building specialized collection in size and strength especially in the acquisition of primary resource material;
- Strengthening the general collections that are responsive to the needs of the changing environment of the university;
- Providing adequate training in IT for staff of the University Library to ensure effective management and use of the services and collection;
- Acquiring adequate resource funding to accomplish library mission;
- Establish and implement ICT in all components of the library operations;
- Developing homegrown databases applications and digitization and preservation of resources electronically;
- Provide relevant “public services” to the community of researchers, professionals, business community and the public at large including training.

6. Responsibility and Authority

Divisional responsibilities are documented in the Divisional Terms of Reference. Staff responsibilities are documented in Job Descriptions and made known to all. TOR are assigned based on the best practices of the University Libraries universally.

The University Librarian is a member of the University Quality Assurance Committee. As the internal level a senior librarian has been assigned to look at need for the Quality Assurance standards. He will be responsible to ensure that processes for quality are implemented and maintained; reporting on the performance of quality assurance and any need for improvement; ensuring the promotion of awareness of customer requirements.

7. Resource Management

The library is involved in the university decision making and in institutional budgetary processes. The Library with the support of the University authority provides acceptable human and financial resources to ensure effective operations and services for achieving customer satisfactions. Technical and operational supports are given by relevant departments within UBD for various needs. These are as follows:

- Bursary for managing library finances,
- ICTC for ICT needs and requirements,
- Educational technology Centre for media publishing and printing,
- Registrar Office for human resource management,
- Estates Department for Building Maintenance.

7.1 Human Resources

The library has adequate and appropriately trained staff able to support the Library's mission, goal and objective. Aspects of employment policies and procedures are coordinated through Registrar Office. Procedures and criteria of appointments are controlled by the Public Service Commission. The University provides opportunities to enhance the capabilities of staff to support their professional growth and development through the Brunei Government In-service Training Scheme and Human Resource Development Scheme. All staff are aware of their responsibility through divisional job descriptions. Staff performance is assessed through annual performance appraisal system.

Internal staff policy are established through policy circulars and communicated to all staff.

7.2 Access to Information Resources

The UBD library has sufficient information resources to fulfill its stated mission and goals. A hybrid collection of printed and electronic resources are available. The current library collection are mainly relevant to the university's academic programmes, high quality from renown publishers/provides, and readily available and accessible. The resources and services also took into account the needs of the university research programme. These resources are mainly acquired through faculty recommendations, gift and exchange, and recommendation of the library HODs. Currently the library collection stands at 400,000 volumes of books, 519 printed journal titles and 10 electronic journal databases and 1 e-book database.

Optimal use of these resources is fostered through the ongoing Library Orientation and the Information Literacy programme undertaken by the Reference and Bruneiana Division.

Access to electronic resources is allowed from outside campus through the provision of User ids and passwords to users. But this will change with the introduction of a "single sign on systems" in the current e-librray@ubd gidital library project. This project is expected to be completed by end of 2006. The library provides 40 PC terminals to access the subscribe resources and the Internet. UBD library is one of the best equipped libraries in Brunei Darussalam in terms of IT provisions.

The process of the acquisition and use of print, electronic and media resources are governed by the Collection Development Policy. Request for purchase of information resources are made using a special Acquisition Form and all faculty requests should be approved by the respective Dean. The library disseminates new products via product seminar, distribution of publisher's catalogues or promotion through electronic mailing systems. Product trial databases are arranged with suppliers by the Acquisition Division from time to time to seek perspective from the academic staff/community.

The university has assigned a special formula for the distribution of funds to faculties based on student number ratio. However, a contingency fund is made available to support those faculties with exhausted funds.

The library is using the Virtua library systems for its basic housekeeping functions. It is currently embarking on a project to upgrade the library systems facilities encompassing enhancements of the existing library systems, digitisations of the library resources (theses, UBD publications, past year's exam papers and old manuscripts) and also the building up of a university library portal.

The Inter-Library Loan service is a complementing service to address the shortfall of the collection development of the University Library. Demand for this service is increasing every year. The library has devised an Inter-Library Loan Policy to streamline the services.

The library has a standard loan policy for various levels of users:

- Students 15 items for 2 weeks (renewable)
- Lecturer 30 items for 1 month or 3 months
- General/Administrative staff 15 items for 2 weeks
- External users
 - Individuals 4 items for 2 weeks
 - Government officers 4 items for 30 days

The library also allows online renewal, reservation and holds.

The library through its Acquisition and Serials Division is employing measures on reviewing the information resources available/subscribe. These reviews are normally undertaken at the end of the year. These are undertaken by requesting faculty deans to prioritise existing subscriptions and replacing the title with new titles or by usage survey questionnaires of the resources provided.

Efforts are now undertaken to systematically evaluate collections resources and online databases, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

7.3 Financial Resources

Every year the university receives a reasonable amount of funds to support the information resource requirements of the University. This allocation also covers the general operations of the library. The management of this fund is internally coordinated by the Acquisition Department and channeled through the Bursar Office.

The budget distributions of the faculty's information resources requirements will require approval from the Library Committee. The distributions are set by the committee based on the faculty's student numbers. Should the allocated budget be exhausted, request for additional budgets are normally allowed by the Ministry of Finance. The request is possible through Virement Warrant request facilities.

The Acquisition and Serial Division is responsible for monitoring excess spending by faculty and undertake review of the information resources purchased or subscribed.

The use of price quotations for item over BND \$2,000 and government purchase orders are required. Payment transactions are undertaken electronically using the Treasury Accounting and Finance Information Systems (TAFIS).

All library purchases are governed and controlled by the stringent Brunei Government Financial Regulations. Certain flexibility are given by the Ministry of Finance for overseas purchase which has enabled the library to function accordingly.

These flexibility and availability of the additional funding has enable the library to provide uninterrupted supply of information resources hence provide quality services.

Apart from government funding, UBD library is also allowed to undertake income generating activities where income are deposited to the University Fund for future use of the library.

8. Infrastructures

The library makes available a range of technologies for accessing information resources and delivers instructions on their use. The availability of PC terminals enables students to surf the Internet, access the OPAC and subscribed resources.

The library building was designed to provide convenient access to all users including those with disabilities. Suitable accommodations are made available on every floor of the library to provide a conducive place for learning. The 500 seating capacity is adequate to serve the University community.

The University information systems infrastructure is already mentioned above.

Library opening hours are from Monday to Thursday, and on Saturday from 8.00am to 9.00pm. Studies have been undertaken to start opening on Fridays and Sundays as request for weekend openings are now widespread among the university community.

Surveys are undertaken to evaluate performance and services, and statistical information about the services are regularly undertaken.

9. Operations and Processes

Ever since its inception twenty years ago, the library key operations and its support processes conform to the practices of other universities in the region and Europe. The key operations are identified through the organizational structure, and work processed is documented in the Work Procedure Manual and individual and divisional job descriptions and Terms of Reference. The University Library official motto is "Serving your information needs" and for the twenty years anniversary celebration we have our own "University Library: 20 years the heart of UBD"

Actions and processes are reviewed for quality output by superiors. The roles of people within are evaluated through observations and divisional performance reporting by management.

10. Conclusion

The library has been the key support services of the university for the past two decades albeit several issues and challenges were encountered during these periods. The ever-presence support of the University top management was the critical success factors that enable the library to face up to these challenges. With trained professional and para-professional staff providing quality skills and knowledge, coupled with the resources available to the library, it has provide an ideal environment for delivery of excellent services to the community and beyond. The most important point at this moment for the library to continuously maintain and improve the current services is augment the existing systems by adapting to international quality standards in the operations and delivery of services. Subsequently, achieving quality standards certification from internationally recognized body will be vital requirements to maintain the desired quality services and operations of the library.