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<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/655>

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Library Philosophy and Practice 2011

ISSN 1522-0222

Rural Youth's Perceptions of Information Sources and Rural Library Services

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Introduction

It has been recognized that youth populations are the capital for nation building. According to the Malaysian National Census (2000) about 60% of Malaysian youth (age 15-29) are concentrated in the rural areas. This population as already known is a valuable asset for the successor of country development. They are believed to be the agents of change for economic and social growth of the society. They can play an active role for the development of themselves and their environment. They should be actively involved in giving their expertise and assistance in various fields such as education, business, rural industries and human development. The true development must mean the development of man, the creativity of improving their material conditions of living through the use of information available to them. The United Nation describes one of the more significant characteristics of young people is to live under conditions that encourage their imagination, ideals, energy and vision to flourish on the benefit of their societies (United Nation, 2007). They need to be imaginative, energetic and visionary for the benefit of their societies. As information and youth represent two of the largest in country development, it is important to understand the rural youth's perception towards information sources and usage. They are expected to use the information for several reasons such as to complete a task, to solve a problem as well as to decide.

In seeking information, rural youth is likely to depend on a variety of sources. Among valuable sources, library service is recognized, in many studies of human information seeking behavior, as a major source of information. For instance, T.D. Wilson (2000) had reported that the origin studies of information seeking behavior are found related to the library use. However, the characteristics of being rural, especially those who lived in the underserved areas often make it hard for them to access information and translate that information into useful knowledge. In many discussions on the rural development, rural communities are often described as disadvantage communities. For people living in these underserved areas, it is crucial to have access to information in printed or online materials. Concern has been raised by several relevant studies about the poor services of rural libraries.

Studies such as conducted by Momodu (2002) showed that rural populations in Nigeria are lack of access to information, which is a vital necessity for their developmental process. For this reason, it is important for the government to examine and, where necessary, improved and expanded services related to the information delivery. However, for library services to become more effective and meet the needs of groups, it is vital to identify the rural youths' information needs and gaining an understanding of how and where rural youths seek information. As proposed by Israel and Ilvento (1995), community needs assessment is importance for rural development.

Over the past 20 years, little evidence has been found into youth's information need. Shenton (2004) provided in depth analysis of the research of young people's information seeking showing the limited nature of research on this area. In her analysis, she reported that much of the researches were difficult to synthesize a coherent and comprehensive knowledge base relating to what is known about youngster's information seeking. Since research in this area is limited, this study should be conducted to examine youth's information need as well as the perceptions they make of rural library services. This study enables librarian to plan an effective information service and meet the youth's information needs. To achieve that goal, the study focused on the following research questions:

- a) What kind of information sources do the rural youths use?
- b) Do they satisfy with these sources?
- c) What problems can be identified while seeking information?
- d) How effective do the library services in meeting rural youth's information needs?

Literature review

In order to develop an understanding of the youth's perception towards rural information sources and usage and library services, it is essential to review previous literatures on the related areas. Walter (2003) who writes ".....foundation knowledge about young people's library use is the field of information seeking behavior, a broad area of study encompassing the identification of information needs, the ways in which people seek and search of information to meet those needs the resources that meet those needs, and the ways in which people use the information after they have found it." Research in youth's information seeking has resulted in varied and mixed conclusion. Some of the recent studies are reviewed below.

Silvio (2006), studying Sudanese Youth using semi-structured interviews, found that the youth's information needs is multitudinous. These are: the educational information, racism information, employment information, political information and health information. In addition to fulfill their information needs, they prefer to use informal sources such as from trusted friends, relatives, co-workers rather than visiting the local public library. They believed that these sources are more reliable and authentic compared to the one provided by the radio, television, Internet and other mass media. In contrast, the earlier study by Shenton (2004) reported that magazine and Internet as the primary sources for information obtained by teens. They listed information about hobbies and consumers as their preferred information. Oliver and Oliver (1997) reported that youth participated in information seeking were linked to purposing and fulfilling their practical needs. In another study, Julian (1999) found that teen's information preference was career information. Winston and Paone (2001) listed that the information needs of young adults include homework and research assistance, as well as personal information, information regarding careers, colleges and universities, pleasure reading, and entertainment. Whilst information is essential to youth population, youths are found to be unaware about where to obtain information (Silvio, 2006)

There have been several investigations into the difficulties of information seeking (Fisher, 2004; Julian, 2004). For instance, Fisher et al. (2004) reported though information seeking is viewed as the healthy activity, personal and youth's information needs were not easily met. These problems such as reported by Julian (2004) can be listed such as do not know the location of information, overwhelming of the choices, and unable to formulate question. In order to fulfill youth's information needs, European Youth Information Charter (ERYICA) (2004) suggested that information should be based on the requests of young people and on their perceived information needs. They provide a list of criteria of youth information center such as: open to all young people; provide the equality access to information; easily accessible; free of charge; give an opportunity to young people to participate in different stages of youth information work; co-operate with other youth services and structures and help young people both to access information provided via modern information and communication technologies and develop their skills in using them. According to Smith (2003), successful young adult services plan at a rural library includes of exploring young adult needs and interests, convincing the administration of the need for such services and building a young adult collection and program schedule. It was therefore, considered important for libraries to meet three major categories of young adult needs that is a) research need (for both school and personal exploration), b) recreational needs (reading, listening, and viewing collections) and c) informational needs (family planning, personal care, etc. resources) (Harmon and Bradburn, 1988). A Guide of Young Adult Services describes goals for services for young adults include of providing library collections and services that meet the community needs in the areas of educational, information, leisure and cultural (IFLA, 2001)

In relation to the rural youth information needs and rural library services, Talbot's analysis on information services in three villages known as Falstone, Wooler and West Sleekburn described this point clearly (Talbot, 1997). The results showed that the information services particularly library provides poor services. These poor services related to library services such as computers; opening times and library stocks. In his analysis, rural youth reported that the good services should considered ambiance attractive, information advice mainly about drugs, jobs and training opportunities. In 1970, Bonser and Wenworth published a paper in which they described that the public library has little relevance to the information needs of the adult population. Other recent studies have described the same findings. For instance, Muslib, (1989) found that library plays very less significant roles as the source of information. Mumtaz and Hana (1998) identified the roles of a typical public library were highly irrelevant in relation to daily problem-solving information support. Loertscher and Woolls (2002) found that teens were unsatisfied with the library staff and library resources. They described few characteristics of rural library services: increase access to technology, provide training, welcoming spaces, library hours convenient to them, less restrictive rules and fees, and more opportunities to volunteer.

Corradini (2006) have recently investigated teenager's experiences, expectations, and perspectives on the library use and services in Northern Italy discovered that teenagers used the library to obtain up to date information and to discuss with peers. However, in terms of the problems, they stated "libraries as uninteresting and cold, solemn and rigid, boring and old-fashioned, with their poorly updated collections and the absence of materials on relevant topics". They further suggested several conditions for effective library services. Firstly, library should create connection with young adults; secondly, it needs to update resources; thirdly, library should inform young adults the library collections, services and activities, and finally, it should promote a relationship with schools, teachers, parents, administrators and other external stakeholders. In addition to function effectively, Winston and Paone (2001) stated "It is for this reason, as well as on the basis of the specific research and information needs of adolescents, which services in public libraries targeting this age group should be examined and, where necessary, improved and expanded". The reports of an "Expert Consultation on Rural Youth and Young Farmers in developing Countries" also highlighted the

importance of information support for rural youth. It was suggested that youths need support through a systematic approach to the dissemination of appropriate information that is delivered in a timely, acceptable manner (FAO, 1985).

No study of rural youths in Malaysia has so far been reported in the professional literature. It was, therefore, considered important to conduct this research in order to understand the information needs and their perceptions toward rural library services.

Methodology

Research Approach

The study has been designed to determine the nature of situation (needs and usages of information sources and perceptions of rural youth on rural library services) as it existed at the time of the study. This type of research is descriptive in nature. The research was accomplished by questionnaire survey methodology. As noted by Babbie (1990), questionnaires are useful in gathering descriptive data and testing stated hypothesis and other research questions. After considering the advantages and disadvantages of a self-administered questionnaire, it was decided to design a questionnaire that could be used to determine the information usage and rural library services from rural youth perspectives. A questionnaire was used as the proper instrument for data collection because it is more versatile, economical, and efficient compared to observations.

Population and Sample

This study was conducted a convenience sampling technique. The technique was first chosen because this study was clearly defined to identify the information usage and study the entire population of some limited group (rural youth populations in Selangor). Moreover, the technique has many advantages such as fast, inexpensive, easy and the subjects are readily available. Before the study sample population can be described, it is first necessary to describe the target area. The selected area must have rural library services. Rural library services was considered because the research clearly intends to assess the nature and adequacy of information services provided by libraries to meet the youth's information needs. Since the study needs to know the perceptions of rural youth, the selection of the subjects for the study was accomplished by consulting the Rural Youth Association in Kuala Selangor. The study population consisted of rural youth in Kuala Selangor area who have registered as a member of rural youth association. Only 130 respondents were volunteered as subjects for the study.

A cover letter was drafted for inclusion with the instrument. Appointment for questionnaires distribution with Rural Youth Representative was made through telephone conversation and letter, to fix appropriate times and dates convenient to them. A cover letter was included, explaining the purpose of the survey, introducing the researcher, and requesting participants' assistance and cooperation. The respondents were requested to return the questionnaire on the same day. The total response rate for this study was 100 percent rate. Out of 130 responses received, 126 (97 percent of the total) were found eligible for final analysis. Responses were classified usable if all sections were returned completed. Four instruments were regarded invalid because of too much missing data.

Data analysis

The questionnaires received were logged in by date and assigned a serial number

to determine eligibility of respondents, missing data and inconsistencies in responses. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to create, clean and analyze the data set. Descriptive statistics were generated to summarize all major variables selected from the data set. Frequency distribution on all variables on the questionnaire was done to get the overall picture of how the respondent's responded to each question on the survey instrument.

Findings

The previous literature was examined to develop the questionnaire. The questionnaire included closed-ended statements and scale items and was divided into three main section. Section A was labelled as "Demographic Profile", section B was labelled as "Information Sources and Usage" and section C was labelled as "Perceptions of rural library services". The questionnaire was pre tested by ten rural youths from the same area. The purpose is to to identify any ambiguities in terms or concepts raised. The analysis found only minor adjustments to the original questionnaire.

Profiles of respondents

The first section of the survey questionnaire included questions that collected background information on the rural youth.

The multivariable table below depicts the socio-demographic characteristics of the survey respondents: age group, gender, educational level, occupation, race and marital status. As can be seen in the table 1, respondents' ages ranged from 15 – 30 and the largest proportion (52%) of the respondents was in the range of 15 – 20 years old. In relation to gender, more females (59%) than males (41%) were participating in this study.

Table 1 : Profile of Respondents

Age	Frequency	%
15 - 20	65	52
21 - 25	43	34
26 - 30	18	14
Gender	Frequency	%
Male	52	41
Female	74	59
Ethnicity	Frequency	%
Malay	108	86
Chinese	3	2
Indian	11	9

Others	4	3
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Employment	Frequency	%
Student	76	61
Employed (Government/Private)	18	14
Self-employed	18	14
Unemployed	11	9
Job seeker	3	2

Meanwhile, data analysis on race shows that Malay (86%) respondents were predominantly. The data suggest that majority of the respondents had attended school. Meanwhile, data analysis on job status shows that students are the largest proportion (61%), respondents were reported that they are working at either government/private (14%) or self employed (14%) in comparison to 9% are not working and 2% are looking to a job.

Types of Information obtained

Respondents were asked to indicate the types of information that they acquired for the past year. Rural youths identified information that they obtained in six categories that stand out above all others. It is interesting to note that all the categories relate to the need of youth populations. Table 2 reports the complete list of information that they obtained in the past year.

Table 2: Information obtained by rural youth

Types of Information	Rank
Information about continuing education	1
Information about computer and internet	2
Information about career	3
Information about health	4
Personal interest information	5
Information about policy	6

Rural youth identified a significant need for information on continuing education and information related to computer and Internet. These two information needs ranked highest among respondents, with education information needs ranked as a

first and second for information about computer and Internet. The education information needs is described as information about scholarship, study opportunities in college and universities as well as information on vocational training. Since a majority of the respondents were mainly from secondary school, there was strong emphasis that information focusing on continuing education as described above ranked highest among participant. Need for information about computer and Internet focuses on how to develop a knowledge and skill about computer and Internet. The result showed that rural youths are regarded as information technology savvy.

Information about career is one of the areas about which the youths showed the great concerned. Information about career is defined as the need for career search and job advancement. This information ranked as a third highest among respondents. The results are significant since majority of the respondents are categorized as students, unemployed and job seekers. The study presumed that these categories of students need information about job opportunities.

Although information about health received a low significant need among respondents, but this information is considered as importance compared to the two categories that received the lowest ranked. This information focused on how to get a knowledge related to the growth in a healthy environment such as on hygiene and personal care.

Rural youths identified low significant needs for information about personal interest and policy, with respondents ranked personal interest information as a second lowest and policy information as the lowest ranked. The personal interest information is described as information related to their hobbies. Meanwhile, policy information is about the need to know their rights such as consumer rights, labor act and others that affect to their lives.

Purpose for which gathered information is used

Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons of why do they acquire the above information. Responses for what purpose do these respondents acquire information are given in table 3.

Table 3: Purpose for which gathered information is used (multiple responses)

Purpose	n = 126	
	Frequency	%
For making an important decision	204	48.3%
For gaining a new knowledge	122	28.8%
For doing day to day works	96	22.7%

As is evident from table 3, a very high proportion of the sampled used the information obtained for making an important decision in their life, with percentage of 48.3%. However, the others two reasons, learning a new knowledge and doing day-to-day works received significant percentages of 28.8% and 22.7% respectively. The study presumed that the reasons was significant since youths need information that may shape their life in the future and suggest that the other reasons also benefit immensely from the information acquired by rural youth.

Location of which information is gathered

Table 4 presents the location of which information is gathered.

Table 4: Location of information is gathered (Multiple Responses)

Location	%		
	Male	Female	Total
Home	10	15	25
Office	5	2	7
Cyber Cafe	23	29	52
Library	3	10	13
Community center	-	2	2
Others	-	1	1
Total	41	59	100%

It was found that half of the respondents (52%) seek for information at cyber café. Of the 126 respondents, 31 (25%) seek for information at home and 17 respondents or 13% reported “at library”. Another 7% respondents used their office to locate the information. Only 2% of the respondents visited a community center to seek for information. A high number of female groups reported to obtain information at each location except at the office compared to male groups. What is interesting in this data is that male groups consider the rural library (3%) as the lowest ranking as their preferred location of obtaining information.

Information Channels Used By Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate information channels employed by them for getting the needed information. The results obtained from the data analysis are presented in table 5.

Table 5: Information channels used by respondents (Multiple Responses)

Information Channels	n = 126	
	Frequency	%
Internet Sources	73	36
Family / Friends	62	31
Association clubs	27	13

Library	23	11
Field experts	13	7
Government agencies	4	2

Of the six information channels, the most frequently used of information channel was Internet with 36% of respondents reported to always use the Internet to seek for information. It was followed by 'family and friends' with 31% of respondents always to discuss with their family and friends to get information. Data reveals that association clubs and library received the third and fourth preferred choice with percentage of 13% and 11% respectively. The two lowest used information channel are field experts and government information sources with 7% and 2% respectively. Not surprisingly, the data reveal a preference for Internet sources as the most frequently utilized source of information because youths generally are being exposed to the computer during their school time and therefore most of them are technology savvy.

Level of satisfaction with the information used

The data related to satisfaction with information obtained are presented in table 6.

Table 6: Level of satisfaction with the information used

Information Satisfaction	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ease of use	3.86	.629
Relevance	3.72	.711
Accessibility	3.63	.652
Up to date	3.77	.717
Completeness	3.50	.874

Scale: 1, Strongly Disagree to 5, Strongly Agree

There are five factors to be important determinants of user's satisfaction towards information. Respondents were asked to rate on a 5 point-scale (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree) to which they agree with the factors as listed. Table 4, summarizes survey responses to this question by presenting the means and standard deviations. As the table 5 depicts, 'ease of use' received the highest ranking in terms of user's satisfaction of information (mean = 3.86). The ranking for all factors determinants of information satisfaction are exactly the same with respondents considered to satisfy with the information. Satisfaction with the "completeness of information" (mean = 3.50) received the lowest rank.

Problems faced while searching for information

The respondents were asked to express their opinions regarding seven problems listed in the questionnaire. Respondents who did not face problems may also indicate their express with 'have no problems'. The data related to problems faced

is presented in table 7.

Table 7: Problems faced while searching information (Multiple Response)

Problems	Rank	Frequency	%
Lack of money	1	43	21
Have no Information Center	2	35	17
Lack of computer facilities	3	33	16
Understand the information contents	4	24	12
Language problems	5	19	9
Lack of information skills	6	16	8
Lack of library skills	7	11	5
Have no problems		27	13

One of the problems identified in many articles of rural developments is a low-income population. It is not, therefore, surprising that these respondents consider the 'lack of money' as their top ranked problems (21%) in searching for information. About 35 (17%) respondents consider "have no information centers" as their problem. Meanwhile, 33 (16%) respondents reported that lack of computer facilities was the problem they faced while searching for information. The data reveals that 24 (12%) respondents had problem with the information contents. A small proportion of respondents consider they had problems with language; lack of information skills and lack of library skills with percentage of each were 9%, 8% and 5%. However, the result shows that 27 (13%) of respondents have never had problems while searching for information.

Form of information preferred by respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their preference of two forms of sources. The definition of each source was given in the questionnaire. For instance; 1) printed information is defined as paper-based information, and 2) electronic information – information retrieved via Internet. The results obtained from the data analysis are shown in table 8. Over half of the respondents (62%) reported that they were preferred to access electronic information sources compared to 38% reported to use the printed information.

Table 8: Form of information preferred

Form of Sources	n: 126 %
Printed Sources	38
Online Sources	62

The table 9 below illustrates some of the main characteristics of information usage by gender

Table 9: Form of information preferred by gender

Gender	Printed sources	Online sources	Total
Male	12 (10%)	40 (32%)	52 (41%)
Female	36 (29%)	38 (30%)	74 (59%)
Total	48	78	126

More males (32%) than females (30%) used online sources. Although the result show that more usage of online sources compared to printed sources within female groups, but the total number of females who used printed sources were still high. In regard to the language preference (table 10), over half of those surveyed reported that they prefer information sources in Malay language. It is apparent from this table that the language preferences are based on respondents' native language. Although English language does not feature prominently as the language preference but English seem to be one of the factors of source selection, given the high scores of 52%.

Table 10: Language preference by race

Race/Language	Malay	Chinese	Tamil	English	Total
Malay	70	0	0	39	109
Chinese	1	1	0	0	2
Indian	1	0	5	5	11
Others	2	0	0	2	4
Total	74 (59%)	1 (1%)	5 (4%)	52 (36%)	126 (100%)

Youth's Perception on Rural Library Services

In this section, the descriptive statistic of youth's perception towards local information services, mainly rural library was presented. The description focuses on: rural library usage, youth's satisfaction towards rural library and youth's recommendation on rural library services

Library Visit

With regard to the use of rural library, the survey instrument asked respondents to indicate their usage of rural library. Table 11 reveals an interesting finding, although libraries were not ranked highly among sources of information, but the overall use of the library among respondents surprisingly high. The results indicated that 60% of the respondents have been used the library. The characteristics of library user is described in table 12 and 13, the result shows that more females (72%) than males (44%) ever used the library. Age distribution shows that rural youth below than 20 years old (45%) were the majority of library users. Forty percent had never been to the library but would “consider going” in the future, with percentages of 51% said that they found out about to go to the library in the future. The overall response to this question was good.

Table 11: Usage of rural library by Age

Age	Yes	No	Total
15 – 20	57	9	66
21 – 25	14	29	43
26 – 30	5	12	17
Total	(60%)	(40%)	(100%)

Table 12: Usage of rural library by Gender

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Male	23	29	52
Female	53	21	74
Total	76 (60%)	50 (40%)	126 (100%)

Table 13: Intention to use rural library by gender

Gender	Yes	No	May be	Total
Male	15	3	10	28
Female	10	1	10	21
Total	25 (51%)	4 (8%)	20 (41%)	49 (100%)

Library Usage Obstacles

Library usage obstacles of rural youths are presented in table 14. The finding show that of the fifty respondents who were not visited the library reported that

“lack of time” (37%) as the main reason of library usage obstacles. Twenty-one respondents (24%) consider “have other options of information access” as a second obstacle. Awareness of the library establishment (11%) and the library location (10%) all had a lower rating.

Table 14: Library usage obstacles (Multiple Response)

Library Usage Obstacles	Rank	Frequency	%
Lack of time	1	33	37
Have other options of information access	2	21	24
Not interested	3	16	18
Do not aware of library establishment	4	10	11
Library location	5	9	10

Frequencies of Library Visit

Respondents were asked to indicate their extent of usage on a four-point scale (1= everyday, 2 = once a week, 3 = once a month, 4 = when necessary). Table 15 presents a summary of the replies that were received.

Of the 76 respondents who were visited the rural library, almost two thirds (68%) of the respondents visit the library when necessary, while 22% of the respondents do visit once a week. About 9 % sought information in the library once a month and only 1% visit the library everyday.

Table 15: Frequencies of Library Visit

Age	Total
Everyday	1
Once a week	22
Once a month	9
When necessary	68
Total	(100%)

Adequacy of Rural Library Infrastructure

Respondents were asked to provide their assessment of the adequacy of the rural library infrastructure in meeting their information needs on a five-point scale (1= strongly inadequate, 2 = inadequate, 3 = neither inadequate nor adequate, 4 = adequate, 5 = strongly adequate). These include: library collection, computer and Internet services, library staff, reading area and program activities.

Table 16: Adequacy of rural library infrastructure

Library infrastructure	Mean	
Library collection	2.91	Inadequate
Internet services	3.14	Neither inadequate nor adequate
Library staff	3.06	Neither inadequate nor adequate
Reading area	3.30	Neither inadequate nor adequate
Program activities	2.45	Inadequate

Scale: 1, Strongly Inadequate to 5, Strongly Adequate

As the table 16 depicts, the most striking result emerge from the data is that the library infrastructures were shown to have negative responded from the participants. Respondents considered that program activities and library collection were not adequate to them. Each of the infrastructures received mean score = 2.45 and mean score = 2.91. Meanwhile, the results showed that the adequacy of Internet services (3.14); library staff (3.06) and reading area (3.30) were neither inadequate nor adequate. The overall response to this question was not good.

Methods suggested improving the rural library services

Respondents were asked to express their opinion on how to increase the library services. The table 17 illustrates the rank order of suggested methods to improve rural library services. Of six options listed, the respondents chose only three suggested methods by which the library could improve its services. They were increasing the promotional activities, followed by providing varieties of services and library staff, who are able to meet the rural youth need.

Table 17: Methods suggested improving the rural library services

Suggestion Method	n:126 %
Increase promotional activities	44
Varieties of services	40
Knowledgeable and skilled staff	16

Overall information satisfaction provided by rural library

The respondents were also asked whether the library fulfills their information needs. Table 18 shows the results of level of satisfaction towards information in a rural library. Fifty-six (74%) of the 76 respondents, who visited the library, agreed that library was not fulfilled their information needs. These include strongly disagree (4%), disagree (20%) and neither agree nor disagree (49%). Only 26% of the respondents agreed and 1% strongly agreed with the statement. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean score for the degree of agreement comes to 3.01, meaning

'neither agree nor disagree'.

Table 18: Information satisfaction provided by rural library

Information Satisfaction	n:126 %
Strongly agree	1
Agree	26
Neither agree nor disagree	49
Disagree	20
Strongly disagree	4

Mean score: 3.01

Discussion

Participants in this study were samples of the group of rural youths with different socio demographic characteristics. On the questions of the demographic profiles, this study found that Malay participants are the largest proportion. This is reflecting to the national data on Malaysian population shows that majority of Malay lives in rural areas. Findings also indicate that very few rural youths of ages 25 years and above who participate in this study. It seems possible that this result is due to the migration of rural youth to the urban areas, particularly those who were finishing their study and looking for the job opportunities.

The information needs of these participants broadly fall into six categories, which relate to the needs of youths. The current study shows that the most information sought by rural youths was information about continuing education. A possible explanation might be that the largest participants were aged 15 to 25 years old whereby most of them are students and school leavers and thus, the information seems very importance to them. This finding is in agreement with Silvio (2006) findings that showed that education information was the first choice of their information needs.

The information gathered by these respondents appears to be mainly used for making an important decision. This result may be explained by the fact that youth need to decide the future of their life. Rural youths use a wide variety of sources, both printed and online sources, to obtain the needed information with more males preferred to use online sources compared to females. This finding is in agreement with Reynold's (1999) findings which showed that teens needed access to a wide variety of information in both print and electronic information format, in order to meet the demands placed on them as students and to help deal with issues they faced as young adults. In relation to the language preference, Malay language was considered as the top ranking. This result may be explained by the fact that majority of the rural youth are Malay and it may be that the selection of language are based on their native language. This finding is in agreement with Armstrong, Lord and Zelter (2000), which showed that new resources in library should be translated into local language.

It is interesting to note that about half of the participants use the cyber café to obtain the information. It seems possible that the result is due to the economic

reasons whereby Internet connections and personal computers are not affordable for some people in rural areas. The present finding seems to be consistent with another research conducted by (Syed and Zaini, 2009) which found that most of the cyber café users are from the younger generation and most of them are students. A majority of the respondents of this study claims to use the Internet as a source of information. This figure is closer with those of other studies of information needs and seeking behavior (Shenton, 2004; Chan and Fang, 2007; Mumtaz, Hussein and Abdullnaser; 2004) and suggests that Internet is the main source of information sources. However, this result is rather disappointing because the library seems not very importance for rural youth as a source of information. In relation to the satisfaction that they gained with the information obtained, the result shows that majority of the respondents satisfied with the information in terms of “easy to understand”, “its relevancy”, “its accuracy”, and “up to date” although some of them are not really agreed with the information completeness. These positive perceptions may explain the relatively good rural youths in information searching skills. However, these results need to be interpreted with caution. Another important finding was associated to the rural youths’ problems when searched the information. The results of this study indicate that “lack of money” as a major problem. These findings may be because the majority of rural populations have a low-income level. Meanwhile, the third problem produced a result, which corroborates the findings of Haseloff (2005), which found that lack of computer access of some developing countries. It is somewhat surprising that information and library skills are not the major problem. It may be that these rural youths have been thought the skills at schools.

In regard to the rural library usage, this study shows the positive results whereby more than half of the respondents with majority of them were female have visited the library. The study confirms the findings of many other studies such as conducted by Applegate (2008) who found that the gender difference in the use of library: the male patrons in many respects were simply below average (fewer visit, fewer services or resources used). Many visit the library when necessary. For those who do not visit the library consider the “lack of time” as the top ranking problems. The second obstacle goes to “have other options of information sources”. These findings of the current study are consistent with Cheunwattana (1999) who found that the low use and no use of rural communities in Thailand are caused by inadequate access to libraries services, unavailability of appropriate reading materials, preference of other media, particularly television, and lack of time because people are struggling for their economic survival. Other possible explanation of this might be that the respondents go to cyber café and use Internet. As the findings from the previous work (Syed and Zaini, 2009) indicate that they go to the cyber café for entertainment purposes not for educational purposes, therefore this result was not very encouraging.

This study set out with the aim of assessing the adequacy of rural library infrastructures. These infrastructures consist of library collection, Internet services, library staff, reading area and program activities. Rural youths are generally not satisfied with library services and facilities. In regards to these problems, rural youths highlight three possible solutions. There are increasing promotional activities, providing a variety of sources and placing knowledgeable staffs in the library. There are similarities between the recommendation expressed by a rural youths in this study and those describe by Loertscher and Woolls (2002). Overall satisfaction on the information in rural library, rural youths expressed dissatisfaction with the information provided.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There are several implications of the findings of this study for information service providers, such as rural libraries and rural library administrators. Rural libraries must provide rural youths with access to information in both print and electronic formats. The information should cover the areas, which relate to their needs such

as information related to education opportunities and computer technology. The problems while seeking the information highlighted in this study suggest that rural library should provide services at no cost, increase promotional activities and computer facilities with Internet connection.

The current study showed that rural youth do not see the rural library as a place for meeting their information needs. This will have very serious implications for the library of the future. Future studies are needed to arrive at a greater understanding of how to sustain the rural library services in this technology era. Emphasize should be given to the library resources such as human resources, budget and technology resources. Based on the findings of this study, implications exist for several members of the library profession – rural library administrators and rural librarian. Perception of the rural library by rural youths should be of primary importance to the profession. No longer can the rural library ignore the needs of users and surveys. As for rural library administrators, they should think their service approach in light of these findings.

Those who have never used the rural library were more likely to have other options of information sources. They seem to go to cyber café to access for information. The finding that we have identified therefore assists in our understanding of the role of rural library administrators to increase the rural library awareness of the importance of rural library as a place for obtaining information and knowledge. It may mean that the rural librarian should make every effort to convince those see its existence as unnecessary. The rural library administrators should provide services that no other institution can outmatch.

Of the number responding to the survey, the demographic profiles seem to bias for rural youth aged 15 - 20 years and students. Since students were shown to be more participating in this study and most of their perceptions have been considered, different strategies should be developed by the library to all profile of respondents. The present study was limited to Kuala Selangor area; therefore, results may not be generalized to other areas of this country for several reasons. One, the site of the present study was chosen may be different from other rural areas in terms of its economic, social and technology development. Two, the ethnic group in this study may not be typical for other states such as in Sabah and Sarawak. Further investigations need to be carried out in various parts of the country, so they can be compared with the findings of the current study.

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