Co-Operation between Librarians and PhD Students to Enhance Library Collection Development

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates whether there is adequate communication between librarians and the postgraduate students in the collection development process. The primary objective of this research is to critically evaluate the existing collection development process of *Pandai* librarians and investigate the criteria used to strengthen the library collection development. This research also critically investigates whether there is effective communication between librarians and postgraduate students to improve the library collection development. A triangulation method (quantitative, qualitative and descriptive) is employed in the investigation. The instruments used in this study, in which 150 postgraduate (PhD) students, 14 librarians and 15 support staff of the library participated, included questionnaires, interviews and observations. Result from observation revealed that librarians were helpful in providing information at the reference counter. Their body language, smiles and eye contacts communicated friendliness. Overall observations showed that reference librarians and support staff were well mannered, sociable and responsive. The findings from interviews and questionnaires showed that there was inadequate communication between the librarians and postgraduate students (PhD) to enhance the collection development process. The majority of the support librarians 83.3% agreed that postgraduate students were not consulted for the collection development process while only (16.6 %) indicated that postgraduate students were sometimes consulted by email. From 12 qualified librarians with a master's or basic degree, 85.5% of the qualified librarians said that in their collection development process, postgraduate students (PhD) were not consulted.

Index Terms: Postgraduate students, library, collection development, communication, decision making

Introduction
Communication between librarians and library users, especially postgraduate students, is vital in enhancing the library's collection development process as well as meeting the scholarly needs of students. A very crucial function of a library is its collection development, which also impacts the status of the university, nationally and internationally (Zain,2004). Effective communication between librarians and postgraduate students allows librarians to evaluate their own effectiveness. Librarians and knowledge seekers alike are responding to this core issue to enhance their collection development (Kathleen et al., 2007). Information and communication technologies have paved the way for librarians and users to communicate with each other in order to provide vital feedback and much needed information concerning their work. Internet and e-mail are very useful tools for effective communication for such a purpose. Librarians and the students must be educated to cooperate in order to achieve successful information delivery (Gudakuvaska, 2001). As such, scholarly communications are forcing librarians to shift their mental models and modify their services accordingly. Librarians have to attune their vision and mission to the needs of library users. Consultations with users would certainly help to fine-tune achievable goals and objectives. Only then can librarians celebrate success in their scholarly collections and development.

Problem Statement
This study investigates whether there is adequate communication between librarians and the postgraduate students in the collection development process. It is important that librarians attract users by increasing their value added activities in the library (Taylor, 1986). Good communication would also pave the way to meeting the scholarly needs of students (Normann, 1994). Librarians must communicate with students to improve their collection while students must come forward to discuss their needs. Such collaborative discussions or joint activities would create a meaningful learning environment (Suchman,1987; Davenport, 2002). To ensure that librarians improve their collection to cater to the needs of its users, especially PhD students, it is important to explore the factors that affect the quality of their collection. In this connection, it would be useful to know how the librarians strengthen their collection and development of materials.

Literature Review
For librarians to stand tall in their collection development, they must consider their users' needs as well as be in constant communication with library users, especially postgraduate students (Durr, 2011). Postgraduate students require more scholarly materials to do better research. Librarians need to consult them regularly and update their material collection.

Only then, librarians can offer engaging and purposeful materials to their patrons. Librarians are, undoubtedly, a vital part of a systematic delivery system. Librarians are not merely book keepers; more importantly, they should function as information managers. They need to convey information not only within the library but beyond the library walls too (Berry, 2011) High quality customer service must be part and parcel of their responsibilities (Paterson 2011). Apart from being custodians of information, librarians must be ready to provide users, especially postgraduate students, with information that would help them in their scholarly research. One of the major functions of a good library is to provide life-long learning. Hence it is essential that librarians and library users, especially postgraduate students, communicate on the same wavelength (Iveta, 2001).

Librarians should always strive to improve their efficiency in providing useful information to meet the needs of their clientele. There should be opportunities for interaction between librarians and users. Librarians must ensure all communication devices are utilized in the best manner possible for information acquisition, presentation and communication (ESF, 2002). As an information provider, one of the top objectives of a library must be to ensure that its users are able to gain maximum benefit from the resources available. This objective can be achieved by investing in efforts to educate users and library staff alike. Staff education includes improving their qualifications, providing conducive and motivating work environment and, most importantly, setting higher performance targets. Competent librarians also stay connected with their clientele. When both parties are able to communicate effectively, scholarly research and other academic pursuits will be more successful.

Communication between librarians and students, especially postgraduate students, is vital if the library wants to ensure that it achieve its goals (Mary, 2010). Librarians play a very significant role in our society. They help users find much needed information for their research. Apart from assisting end-users, the responsibilities of librarians include document processing, sourcing information, and providing strategic planning and training. These vital functions of librarians can only be carried out successfully if there is adequate communication between students and librarians regarding the library needs of the former (Doug, 2010).

Significance of the Study
1.   The findings of this research would help librarians improve communication with users, especially postgraduate students, in order to enhance the library's collection development process.
2.   The findings of this research would help librarians make better investment regarding the purchase of communication devices.
3.   The findings of this research would also help the university staff and scholars locate the required reference materials more efficiently.
4.   Feedback from observations, interviews and questionnaires provides valuable information for future researchers.

Objectives
1.   To critically evaluate the existing collection development process of librarians and investigate the criteria used to strengthen the library collection development.
2.   To critically investigate whether there is effective communication between librarians and postgraduate students to improve the library collection development.
3.   To propose a viable and workable plan of action to librarians so that resources are used efficiently.

Methodology and Data Collection
This study applied quantitative and qualitative analyses coupled with observations to carry out the investigation. Since this research deals with human feelings and perceptions, such a triangulation method is most appropriate in conducting the study. Research also shows that a combined methodology design helps the researcher to better understand the research problem (Faryadi, 2010). The data collection for this study was conducted by the researcher. The whole process of distributing the questionnaires on and collection of feedback took two weeks.

The response rate was satisfactory. From 150 questionnaires distributed to postgraduate students, 120 students responded. 15 librarians were requested for an interview; 12 attended. 15 support librarians from the reference desk agreed to attend an interview. The interviews were conducted informally to elicit better cooperation. The questionnaires and interview sessions had been tested for reliability and validity on a similar population i.e. pilot group. The questioners were then fine-tuned and retested with the target group.

The framework for data analyses in this study was adapted from the work developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The primary tools used to analyze the collected data were the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16.0) and Microsoft Excel. Data were categorized and meaningfully reconstructed according to the problem statements and objectives of the research. Crucial data were selected for scrutiny, before being simplified for easy comprehension.

Data were then cross-checked few times to determine its face validity and reliability.

Population and Instruments

This research was conducted at the Library of *Pandai* in Malaysia. At the point of writing, there were more than (150) postgraduates pursuing PhD programs. A total of 150 postgraduate students (PhD) and 14 librarians participated in the study. Apart from the 14 librarians, the chief librarian, deputy chief librarian and 15 support staff agreed to be interviewed. The instruments used to collect data were (1) questionnaires for students; (2) questionnaires for librarians; (3) interviews with randomly selected students and librarians; (4) interviews with the chief librarian and his deputy; (5) observations of activities at the reference desk in the library; and (6) observations of the librarians' daily activities in the library.

Results

Result from observation revealed that librarians were helpful in providing information at the reference counter. Their body language, smiles and eye contacts communicated friendliness. Overall observations showed that reference librarians and support staff were well mannered, sociable and responsive. The findings from interviews showed that there was inadequate communication between the librarians and postgraduate students (PhD) to enhance the collection development process. The main line of communication was through supervisors and lecturers who recommended reference materials for students, especially those pursuing postgraduate studies.

This study further illustrated that postgraduate students (PhD) were not consulted regarding their scholarly needs. The majority of the support librarians (83.3%) agreed that postgraduate students were not consulted for the collection development process while only16.6 % indicated that postgraduate students were sometimes consulted by email. From 12 qualified librarians with a master's or basic degree, 85.5% of the qualified librarians said that in their collection development process, postgraduate students (PhD) were not consulted. Observations and surprise checks at the reference desk indicated that books requested were not always available.

During the two weeks of observation at the reference desk, it was noted that activities in the reference desk were fewer than usual. May be it was due to the revision week for the exam. Feedback from the postgraduate participants (PhD) showed that majority of them (80%) indicated that they had not been invited to participate in any discussion on collection of library materials.

It was noted that only 4.1% of the postgraduate (PhD) students did not answer this question.

Table 1 Summary of the Research Instruments and the Respondents

No	Instruments	Respondents	Sample	Collection
1	Questionnaire	Students	150	120 (80%)
2	Interviews	Librarians	14	12 (85.7%)
3	Observation	Library- students	300	300 (100%)
4	Interview	Reference desk	18	10 (83.3%)

Summary of the Research Instruments and the Respondents

Table 1 shows the summary of data collection instruments and the participants. The results indicated that out of 150 PhD students 120 (80%) agreed to participate in the research. Out of 14 librarians only, 12 participated while out of 18 support librarians, 10 agreed to be interviewed. Observation from communication between support librarians and students indicated that reference librarians were pleasantly helpful in providing needed information to the students. Unstructured interviews were conducted to determine librarians and support staff performance.

It is worth mentioning that the questions tendered to the participants were not formal questionnaires. The purpose of having informal questions was to encourage the interviewees to give as much information as possible.

Table 2: Summary of the Collection Development Process

Selection of material	Acquisition	Assessment	Weeding	Budget
Academic staff Supervisors Dean's approval Library staff Community interest Popularity of the item Subscription	Best possible price Catalogue and Media jobbers Local venders Standing orders	Needs assessment Continual evaluation Person responsible	Periodically removed Reason for weeding Criteria for removing Donate to schools	Depend on the Ministry of Finance approval

Summary Of collection development process

Table 2 explains the process whereby USIM library strengthens its collection and development of materials. The most important aims and objectives of this research were to find out how *Pandai* library processes its collection development. This research also investigates whether *Pandai* library communicates with PhD students in order to meet their scholarly needs and to strengthen their library collections.

Interviews conducted with the reference librarians indicated that most of the collection development process carried out based on recommendations from the academic staff, supervisors and the deans of the faculties

for final approval. Unfortunately, this research found that there was no consultation and communications between the librarians and the PhD students to reinforce the library collection development. Interviews also indicated that the library's collection development process was also based on community interests, popularity of the materials and subscriptions.

The reference librarians were asked this question: H*ow do the librarians acquire materials*? They replied that their acquisitions were mostly based on the best price possible method, vendors' catalogues, media jobbers, local and international vendors and standing orders. This research further showed that the process of assessment of materials was done by a library staff whose job was to continually evaluate the library materials for weeding, after making sure that there was a copy for future reference. The staff was required to give the reasons in writing for his/her decision to remove a particular book. It is worth mentioning that sometimes instead of disposing of the materials; the books were donated to public or school libraries. In response to the question: *How do you manage your budget for the purchase of materials,* the collection development librarian replied that the Ministry of Finance had the final say in approving or disapproving the budget.

Table 3: Reference and Circulation Desks Observation

No	Evaluation Criteria	Responses
1.	Was there anyone present at the reference desk?	Yes
2.	How many people approached the reference desk per hour?	15 per hour
3.	Was the reference librarian interested to help?	Yes
4.	Did the reference librarian look bored or enthusiastic?	Enthusiastic
5.	Did the reference librarian appear disturbed?	No
6.	Did you find what you asked for?	No
7.	How much time did the reference librarian spend with a user?	less than 5 min
8.	Did the reference librarian clarify user's questions?	No
9.	Did the reference librarian make value judgment regarding users' inquiry?	No
10.	How did the reference librarian respond to queries: print or electronic, or both?	Electronic

Reference Desk Observation Results

Table 3 indicates the observation checklists to evaluate the activities at the reference desk. Observation revealed that librarians were helpful in providing information at the reference counter.   The librarians were quite enthusiastic in their job and were more than ready to render help to users. The Library was arranged in a way that books, reference desk, computers and self-help machines are seen easily by the users. The reference desk is located in the middle of reference materials and users sitting area so that it is easily noticed from far. A total of 8 self-check machines and 16 computer terminals have been installed to assist the users meet their information needs. The observation signified that two support librarians operated the circulation counter while a librarian was on duty at the reference desk during the library opening hours.

Observation further showed that the librarians at the reference desk and support librarians at the circulation desk patiently waited for patrons to approach them. Observations revealed that librarians were aware of the approaching patrons and immediately offered their assistance. Their body language, smiles and eye contacts communicated friendliness. Each patron was greeted courteously with *Selamat pagi, boleh saya bantu? (Good morning, may I help you?)* Overall observations showed that reference librarians and support staff were well mannered, sociable and responsive.

Table 4: Summary of Important Questions for Librarians

	Do you communicate with postgraduate students to strengthen your collection development?	Do you think Communication with postgraduate students is vital for survival of the library?	Do you educate the users on how to use the library?
Yes	(0%)	4 (33.3%)	7 (58.3%)
No	12 (100%)	8 (66.6%)	
Sometimes	0%		
Once or twice	0%		5 (41.6%)

Summary of Important Questionnaires for Librarians

Table 4 shows the majority of the librarians (85.7%) interviewed indicated that they did not consult postgraduate students (PhD) in their collection development process. Only lecturers and supervisors were invited to advise them. However, regarding a question whether communication between them and postgraduate students was vital, the majority (66.6%) were of the view that it was not vital.

Only 33.3% of the respondent agreed that communication was vital. When asked whether they had taught students how to use the library, 58.3% said they had frequently done so, while 41.6% replied that they had educated users once or twice. It is interesting to note that the majority of the librarians and support librarians were of the view that experience was more important than qualifications in the running of the library.

Table 5: Summary of Important Questions for Students

	Have you ever been consulted by the librarians to participate in collection development process?	Do you think communication between librarians and users is vital?	Have you been trained by the librarians how to use library materials?
Yes	0%	120 (100%)	20 (16.6%)
No	120 (100%)	0%	85 (70.8%)
Sometimes	0%	0%	5 (4.1%)
Once or twice	0%	0%	10 (8.3%)

Summary of Important Questionnaires for Students

Table 5 presents the summary of important questions for students. The results showed that 80% of the respondents indicated that they had not been consulted in any collection development process. To a question whether communication between librarians and students was vital, the majority of the students (80%) said it was. The results further indicated that 13.3% of the respondents said that they had received training on how to use library materials while 56.6% said they had not. It is of interest to note that 6.6% of the respondents indicated that they been trained at least once or twice.

Conclusion and Discussion
This study obtained valuable feedback regarding the collection development process at the *Pandai* library. Observation revealed that librarians were helpful in providing information at the reference counter. Their body language, smiles and eye contacts communicated friendliness. Overall observations showed that reference librarians and support staff were well mannered, sociable and responsive. However, the research revealed that there was no cooperation and consultation between postgraduate (PhD) students and the library collection development department. It is unfortunate that PhD students were not consulted in the collection department process. The success of collection development of librarians depends on whether it is able to meet the scholarly needs of users. The collection development process in *Pandai* library should not consult only lecturers and supervisors. Feedback from PhD students, who have to carry out extensive research, is vital. Perhaps *Pandai* librarians need to compare notes with librarians in other more established libraries to improve the material collection process.

Implications of the Study for *Pandai* Library Policy Makers
Pandai library policy makers have an important role to play in improving the collection process. Students, lecturers as well as the Education Ministry must support *Pandai* library policy makers to redesign the concepts of collection development process. The findings of this study showed that the lack of communication between librarians and PhD students did not augur well for the development of the collection process. In addition, policy makers should support *Pandai* library planners by providing them with enough funds to continue their collection development effectively.

The following are some suggestions for *Pandai* library policy makers to re-evaluate their collection development:
1. Support and create a library environment that focuses on meeting the scholarly needs of post-graduate students.
2. Support the creation of a library environment that invites scholarly engagement.
3. Support the allocation of funds for scholarly materials.
4. Support autonomy by the collection development department in decision making regarding purchases of materials.

Implications for Future Research
This research investigated the relationship between postgraduate (PhD) students and the library collection development process in *Pandai* library. However, it would be useful to obtain feedback from other library users, besides PhD students, regarding the library collection development. Further research is necessary to investigate *Pandai* library collection development process and compare it with other libraries to find out how they process their collection development so that *Pandai* library may benefit from them.

Limitations of the Study
The results and conclusions of this study were subjected to the following limitations: First, this research focused only on postgraduate (PhD) students. Thus, the results cannot be generalized and further investigations are needed to examine how other users such as Masters and undergraduate students can bring a positive change in the library collection development process. Second, this research recommends further investigations involving longer periods of observation as well as a larger sample to evaluate the effectiveness of material collection. Further, as some of the data were obtained through observations, the subjective bias of the researcher was inevitable.

Suggestions for Further Improvement of the Library
1. Create a learnable, user-friendly and effective library web site to provide direction to the users.
2. Encourage users to submit feedback and suggestions online.
3. Prototype "See You See a Librarian" developed in 1996 by Eric Lease Morgan. The purpose of this service was to investigate the possibility of

providing chat communication between librarians and between librarians and patrons.

4. In the library students are the primary users of digital reference, and they tend to prefer chat reference service to e-mail because it involves a two-way conversation in real time, very much like talking to a reference librarian in person. Chat users can receive immediate feedback, thus they can use written language in the same manner used in a person-to-person conversation.

5. There are several chat systems librarians can choose from; the most widely known are 24/7 Reference, LSSI – Virtual Reference Toolkit, and Question Point. Although such services are commonly associated with a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week service, they can be modified to offer reference service at specific times.

6. With chat, librarians can use a variety of tools to facilitate communication with the patron. One of the most important features in chat reference is the use of software with the ability to co-browse. This feature allows the librarian and the user to communicate while viewing the same web pages.

7. To respond quickly, the librarian can also use pre-written messages. These messages involve typical greetings and sign off texts and are used to reduce the time and typing involved in the reference interview.

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Note: This research was carried out in a University Library named *Pandai* Library. *Pandai* is not the real name. This research is ongoing and another five libraries will be investigated to see what their criteria are in strengthening collection development process.