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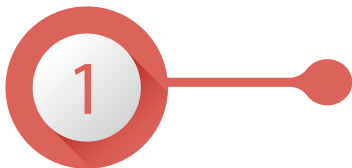
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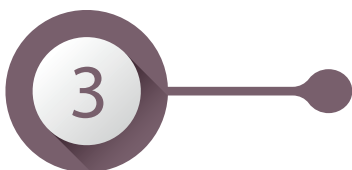
**Informative Water Supply Challenges On The Development Of Towns: A Study Of Minna Town Central Nigeria**

*Salihu Ibrahim, Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani Ahmad Sabri*  
Page 1 - 8



**Academic Library Outreach Program Encounters**

*Nur Amira Eliana Abd Halim, Roziya Abu*  
Page 9 - 16



**Library: An Evolving Entity**

*Roziya Abu, Mary Carroll*  
Page 17 - 27



**The Role of Colonial State in the Emergence of Modern Minna Town 1910-1960**

*Salihu Ibrahim, Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani Ahmad Sabri*  
Page 28 - 36



**The Efficacy of Online Shaming as a Modality for Social Control**

*Haswira Nor Mohamad Hashim, Anida Mahmood, Nurul Shuhada Suhaimi*  
Page 37 - 45



**21st Century Librarian Lead to an Effective Academic Library Services & Development**

*Hasniza Hassim*  
Page 46 - 52



**Prevalent Culture of Online Shaming Amongst UiTM Law Students**

*Haswira Nor Mohamad Hashim, Anida Mahmood, Nurul Shuhada Suhaimi*  
Page 53 - 60





# ACADEMIC LIBRARY OUTREACH PROGRAM ENCOUNTERS

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## ABSTRACT

*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 fails 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 remain. 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 (namely, CS1 and CS2), two most important factors emerge, and it is said to be the key factor the effect an academic library outreach programs. Those factors are: 1) Financial Factor and 2) Staffing Factor*

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## 1. Introduction

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 focuses should initially be to reach in-house users namely students and academician. This is in aligned with the major distinction of target users, financial and collection in an academic library that is contrasts 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 that revealed 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. 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 programs 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, and also the support of teaching of library literacy to library users, (Maitaouthong, Tuamsuk, & Tachamane, 2012).

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 focus on exploring the factors that are affecting two academic library outreach program of the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) in the State of Kedah namely, CS1: Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Darulaman and CS2: Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Sultan Abdul Halim.

## 3. Literature Review

The term outreach is used frequently in the library and information science literature, however, the definition not limited to the library setting only. In the literature, outreach tends to be defined by specific activities that are handled by librarians to the library users in the library. Today, academic libraries have initiated different strategies as an outreach to promote the services of libraries and to reach new users. By implementing successful outreach initiatives, academic libraries gain many opportunities to measure their value to the parent organization. One of the outreach activities that has been run by the academic library in order to promote the services of libraries and to reach the new



users is to 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 and its program served to library users by providing information and resources that are available in the library. Plus, the library can promote the library facilities such as promoting, marketing and public relation 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 doing the promotion and marketing of the services, resources, activities and facilities that are available in the library to the library users in order to fulfil their needs and demands.

Meanwhile, Mu, (2009) defined outreach in academic libraries a service aims to improve the services that are already available and offered in the library to library users. Only by implementing successful opportunities, Mu, (2009) believes that academic libraries can gain many opportunities to measure their value as an organization. Furthermore, there are three factors that have been identified by Schneider, (2003) to consider the outreach such as the need 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 than that, in the 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 trainees 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 are provided in the IPG academic library, and the new trainees are given the opportunities to meet and greet IPG academic library staff members there 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 of the 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 IPGs 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, we have a departmental exhibition; there is an exhibition of independence, our teacher talk activity for a student. In the library, there are exhibitions that will be created in the library. Book exhibition is also made available for library goers. Other than introducing the library as one of as 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 provides a positive feeling and enjoy when visiting the library. The activities that has been held is "Hari Kerjaya" or Library Open Day. The aim of "Just For Fun" wishes to introduce the library and to promote the resource and services 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 order to assure the successfulness of the academic library outreach program in academic libraries that will use their initiative to the maximum, to facilitate this program with a variety of activities and events. And most of these activities and events include both library literacy and information literacy program action. Nonetheless, it all depending depends on the needs of their academic library users.

## **4. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach with in-depth individual interviews as its main data collection. The in-depth, semi-structured interview involved interviewing the service provider (who is the leading librarian of each institution academic library). This study approach is chosen for it is more suitable to gain a better understanding in exploring the factors that affecting an academic library outreach program.

The sampling of interviews that will be done in the research will be purposive because it wishes to

explore a deeper perspective of the research, which is to explore the factors that effecting an academic library outreach program in an academic library of the Malaysian Higher Learning Institution. For purposes of this article, the author will focus of two academic library outreach program of the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) in the State of Kedah namely, CS1: Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Darulaman and CS2: Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Sultan Abdul Halim.

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 effecting 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 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 that will then analyzed to explore the factors that are affecting an academic library outreach program in an 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 only report 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 are affecting the academic library outreach programs of two academics library outreach program of the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) in the State of Kedah namely, CS1: Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Darulaman and CS2: Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Sultan Abdul Halim.

## **5. Finding**

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

### **5.1. Financial**

Generally, financial has been 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 highlight 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. (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. (Librarian from CS2).

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

## 5.2 Staffing

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 qualified staff members 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).

Both librarian 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, academic library staffing plan needs to be updated every year or as the conditions of the institutions changes.

## 6. Conclusion

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 is beyond current or usual limits that a library can offer. Plus these efforts can take all different forms, from a simple face-to-face conversation to a workshops or a tour in a library. All this, offers an advantage to the library in reaching to 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 serviced groups of individuals. Plus it also offers excellent collaboration opportunities amongst institution academic department plus community leaders, groups and organizations that will enhance overall academic library service.

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