

Perceptions of Academicians at Academy of Islamic Studies on Library Services: A Preliminary Study

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper describes a user survey carried out at Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya as an initiative to communicate with library users.

Design/methodology/approach: To the academic staff. The questionnaire was distributed online and also in hard copy format.

Findings: The results of the study are analyzed.

Research limitations/implications: The survey focused on a specific group of users. The survey can be used to study other groups of users such as students and general staff in future.

Practical implications: The survey was a good way of communicating with users. The survey results indicated the level of library service quality.

Keywords: Surveys, User studies, Academicians, Academic Libraries, Library services, Library collections, Islamic collections

INTRODUCTION

Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya was known as Department of Islamic Studies. The main objective of the Academy is to expand, advance and enrich Islamic studies for universal harmony and humanity through research activities, teaching, publications and consultation that are of international standard and quality. The Academy consists of nine (9) departments: Departments of Al-Qur'an & Al-Hadith; Aqidah & Islamic Thought; Dakwah & Human Development; Fiqh & Usul; History & Islamic Civilization; Siasah Syar'iyyah; Shariah & Economics; Shariah & Law; Shariah & Management. There are two (2) programme; Applied Science with Islamic Studies and Islamic Education. The Academy is managed by a director with three (3) deputy directors and head of departments.

The University of Malaya Library consists of a Central Library which provides library facilities for the whole campus and a network of branch and special libraries to meet the specific needs of some faculties. The Islamic Studies Library is one of the special libraries established to assist users from the Academy of Islamic Studies by providing appropriate resources for research, learning and teaching. The Library collection consists of;

- General collection placed at open shelves
- Academic Reserved collection with recommended reading materials suggested by lecturers in their reading lists
- Reference collection consisting of reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and yearbooks
- Theses collection with academic exercises, dissertations and theses written by students of Academy of Islamic Studies
- Free Range Reading collection with light reading materials such as novels and hobbies
- Conference Papers collection with published and unpublished papers presented at conferences held in Malaysia or abroad
- Journal collection with various journal titles in Islamic studies subject areas
- Special collection which consists of materials donated by or acquired from the prominent individuals/scholars, such as the collections of *waqf* (endowment) from Medina, Saudi of Arabia.

The Library Service Counter provides loans, returns, renewals and reservations services for registered users. In addition, inter library loan services are available for final year undergraduates, postgraduates and lecturers.

This article aims to provide information obtained from a library user satisfaction survey carried out among the academicians. It is hoped that the findings of this article would be beneficial and enhance the knowledge of librarians and library managers on the continual improvement of services provided by the library and librarians.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to investigate the level of satisfaction among academicians towards library collections and services.

The study focused on three main areas:

- The level of satisfaction of academicians towards library collections, services and environment.
- The success level of activities offered by library.
- The helpfulness level of training sessions conducted by the librarians.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Min and Yi (2010) evaluated users' satisfaction with library resources and services to understand better the users' needs, preferences, and trends of using library resources through five user surveys conducted campus wide since 2004. These surveys have mainly covered the library-subscribed resources, availability of resources, facilities, librarians, and services. The results of the surveys were used to adjust resources and improve service delivery to meet users' needs better. Nziwo (2012) in his survey on user perception on library services and information resources concluded that low confidence level in retrieval skills and abilities, unfamiliarity with electronic resources, and challenges of user education are the perceived key impediments to access library services and information resources in libraries. Creaser (2006) mentioned that different groups of library users have different priorities and expectations of the service, and a good library service will have sufficient flexibility to meet all those requirements and ensure high levels of satisfaction across all users. A "one-size" library service does not fit all users, and managers should remember that the best provision may not be uniform across the whole service.

Juhaida Abd Rahim (2012) mentioned in her survey about the sufficiency of resources for teaching, learning and research at Islamic Studies Academy. It was found that several areas were identified by the respondents as lacking areas. The areas include Islamic history and civilization, Islamic banking and finance, Islamic law, comparative law, studies in modern and contemporary tafsir, Islamic management, conventional and modern subject, and current issues pertaining to social problems. The survey also found that respondents needed collection development of other areas besides Islamic studies, such as science and technology, information technology, social sciences, art and media, motivation and career, and light reading materials. Norliya Ahmad Kassim, Khasiah Zakaria, and Haslinda Mohamed (9-11 June 2008) in their survey on assessing customer satisfaction on library services and activities recommended that the first implication is that library staff should play an active role in learning and be a life-long learner. This attitude of learning will motivate learning among users of the library. The second implication is librarians should also do research on customer focus and user satisfaction.

Hayden, O'Brien, and Ó Rathaille (2005) did a survey on library services delivery at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) Library and concluded that the main challenge facing WIT Libraries is not to encourage people to use the library service, but rather, to focus on optimizing the "library experience" of its substantial number of current users, particularly students. The survey findings indicated high satisfaction levels with what one might call traditional services such as book collections and help desks. Hebert and Chaney (2012) conducted a survey on library facilities design and management enhancement. The survey results indicated that the respondents were aware of sustainability and sustainable lighting. They were dissatisfied with the library's existing lighting and suggested that these issues be addressed by the university to reduce the library's environmental footprint. They suggested library renovation, and further research of the library's lighting overall sustainability. This may indicate that the concept of lighting sustainability and general sustainability are linked in the minds of the library end-users.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The questionnaires for this study were administered to 90 academicians at the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya. Participation was voluntary and no remuneration was offered. The questionnaires consisted of five (5) questions.

- The first demographic question required respondents to indicate their teaching department.
- The second question required respondents to indicate how often they use Islamic Studies Library's services and facilities.
- The third question required respondents to mention the level of satisfaction on the availability of course books / core texts, e-books, e-journals, online databases, and library environment.
- The fourth question required respondents to choose the success level of completing library activities such as searching library catalog, access online journals, receiving items through inter library loan and document delivery services, locating journal articles using online databases, and feedback from library inquiries.
- The fifth question required respondents to choose the level of helpfulness of sessions conducted by Librarians, such as EndNote, introduction to library homepage, services, & facilities, searching library catalog, searching electronic journals and electronic book, searching online databases, identifying ISI journals, identifying SCOPUS journals, and updating papers in institutional repositories (Eprints).

The data was tabulated and analyzed using SPSS.

FINDINGS

The finding of this study was analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study;

- satisfaction level among academicians towards library collections, services and environment. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, fairly dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, don't know or not applicable,
- level of success of activities offered by library. This section requested respondents to indicate whether they were very successful, fairly successful, neither successful nor unsuccessful, very unsuccessful, don't know or not applicable with library activities, and
- helpfulness level of training sessions conducted by the librarians. Respondents were asked to indicate whether the sessions conducted by librarians were very helpful, fairly helpful, neither helpful nor unhelpful, fairly unhelpful, very unhelpful, don't know or not applicable.

i. Satisfaction Level Among Academicians Towards Library Collections, Services and Environment

The mean satisfaction among academicians towards library collections, services and environment is shown in Table 1 and Figure 1. It was found that the academicians level of satisfaction was highest for the availability of e-books (m=2.67), e-journals (m=2.67), and online databases (m=2.67). The availability of core/text books (m=2.22) and the overall library environment (m=2.11) had slightly lower levels of satisfaction.

Table 1. Mean Satisfaction towards Library Collections, Services and Environment

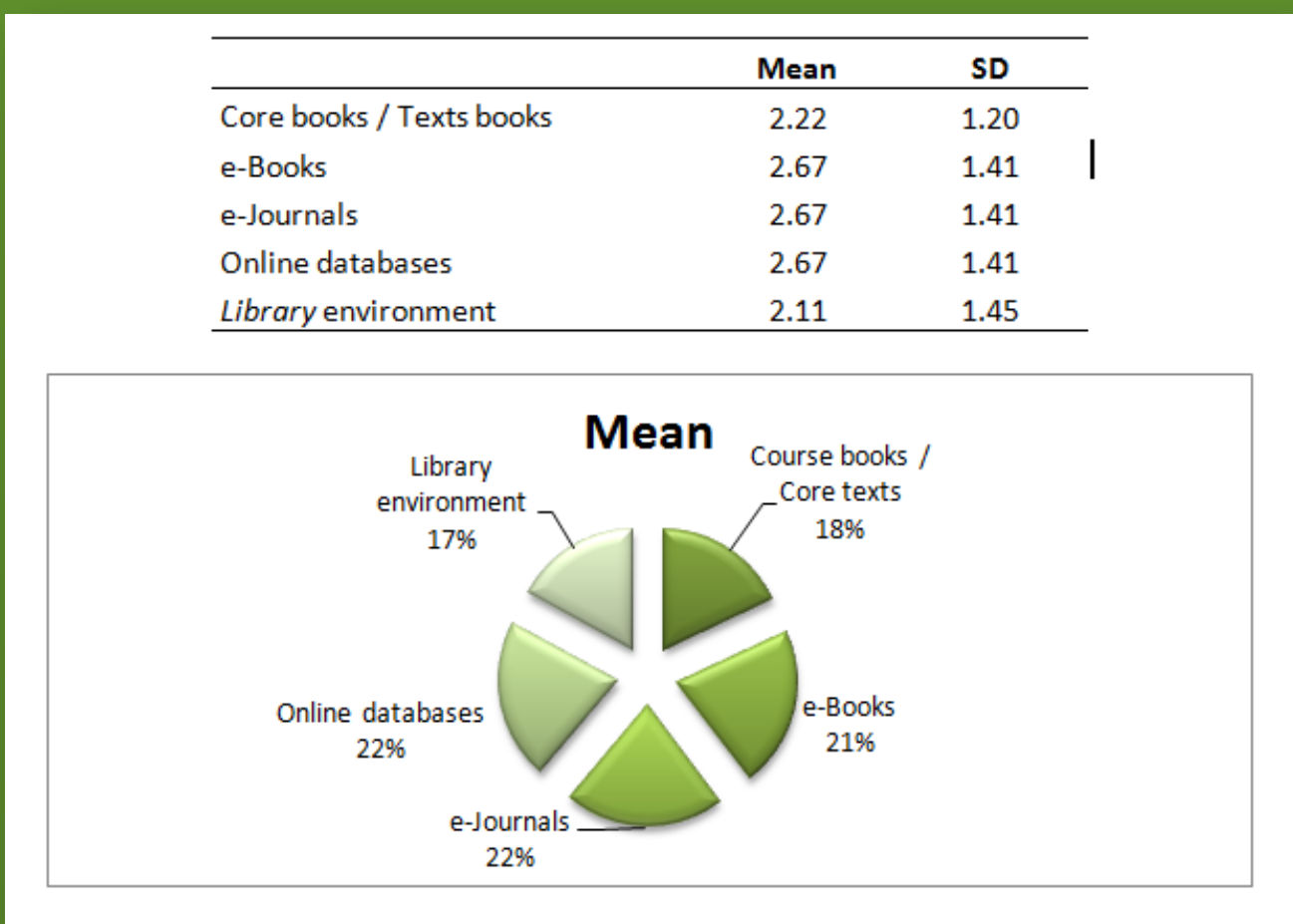


Figure 1. Mean Satisfaction towards Library Collections, Services and Environment

ii. Successfulness Level of Activities Offered by Library

The mean level of success of activities offered by the library is shown in Table 2 and Figure 2. It was found that locating journal articles using online databases had the highest mean (m=2.67), followed by accessing online journals (m=2.44), feedback from library enquiries (m=2.44), receiving items through inter library loan (ILL) or document Delivery (DD) services (m=2.33), and searching library catalog (m=2.11).

Table 2. Mean Level of success of Activities Offered by Library

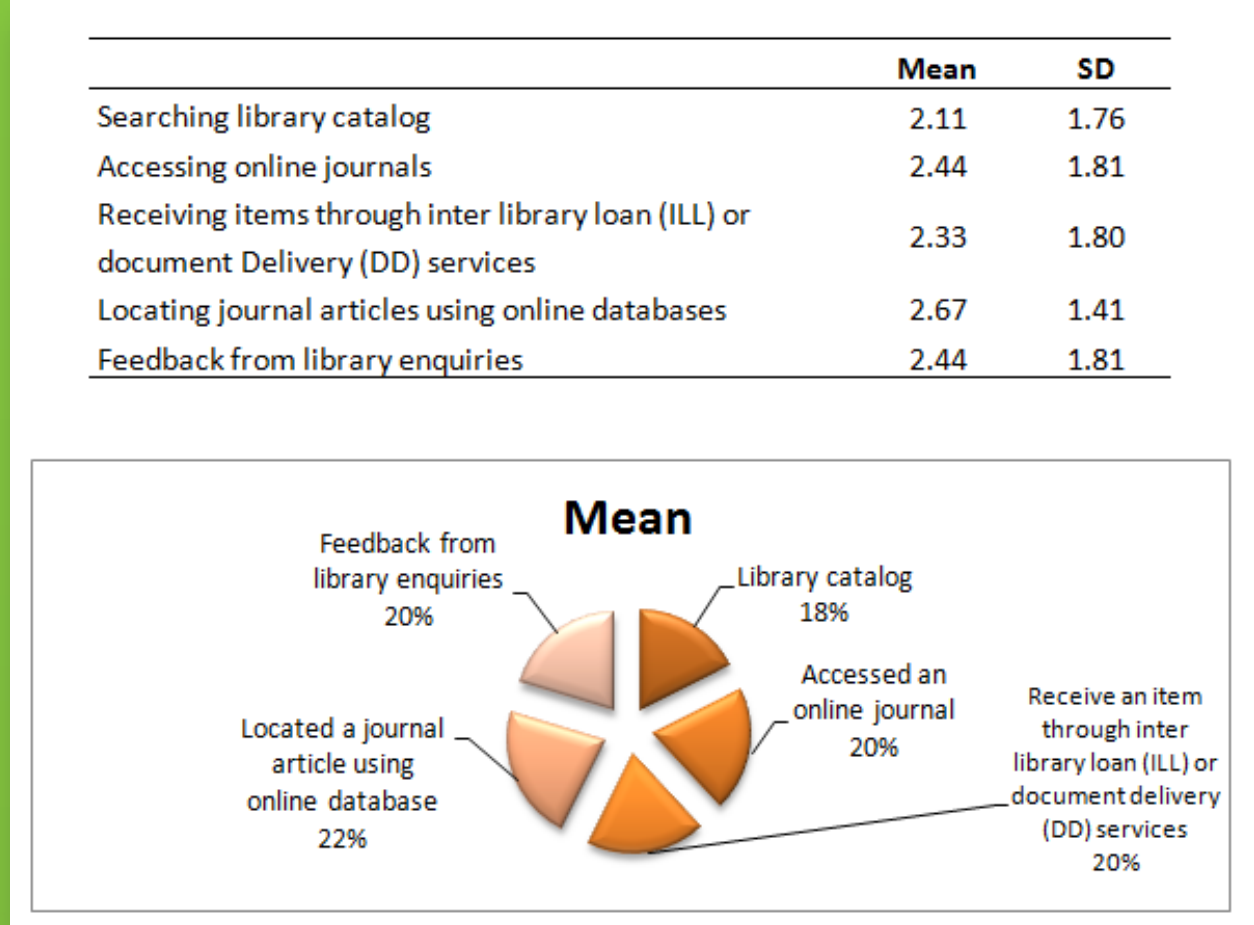


Figure 2. Mean Level of Success of Activities Offered by Library

iii. Helpfulness Level of Training Sessions Conducted by the Librarians

The training sessions inclusive of EndNote, introduction to library homepage, services, & facilities, searching library catalog, searching electronic journals & electronic books, searching online databases, identifying ISI journals, identifying SCOPUS journals, and updating papers using institutional repositories (Eprints). The mean helpfulness of sessions conducted by librarians is shown in Table 3 and Figure 3. It was found that the EndNote session was helpful with the highest mean (m=3.56), followed by introduction to library homepage, services & facilities (m=3.44). Searching electronic journals & electronic books (m=3.22), searching online databases (m=3.22) and updating papers using institutional repositories (Eprints) (m=2.89) had the same mean and followed by searching library catalog (m=3.11). Identifying ISI journals (m=2.89) and identifying SCOPUS journals (m=2.89) had the lowest mean.

Table 3. Mean Helpfulness of Training Sessions Conducted by the Librarians

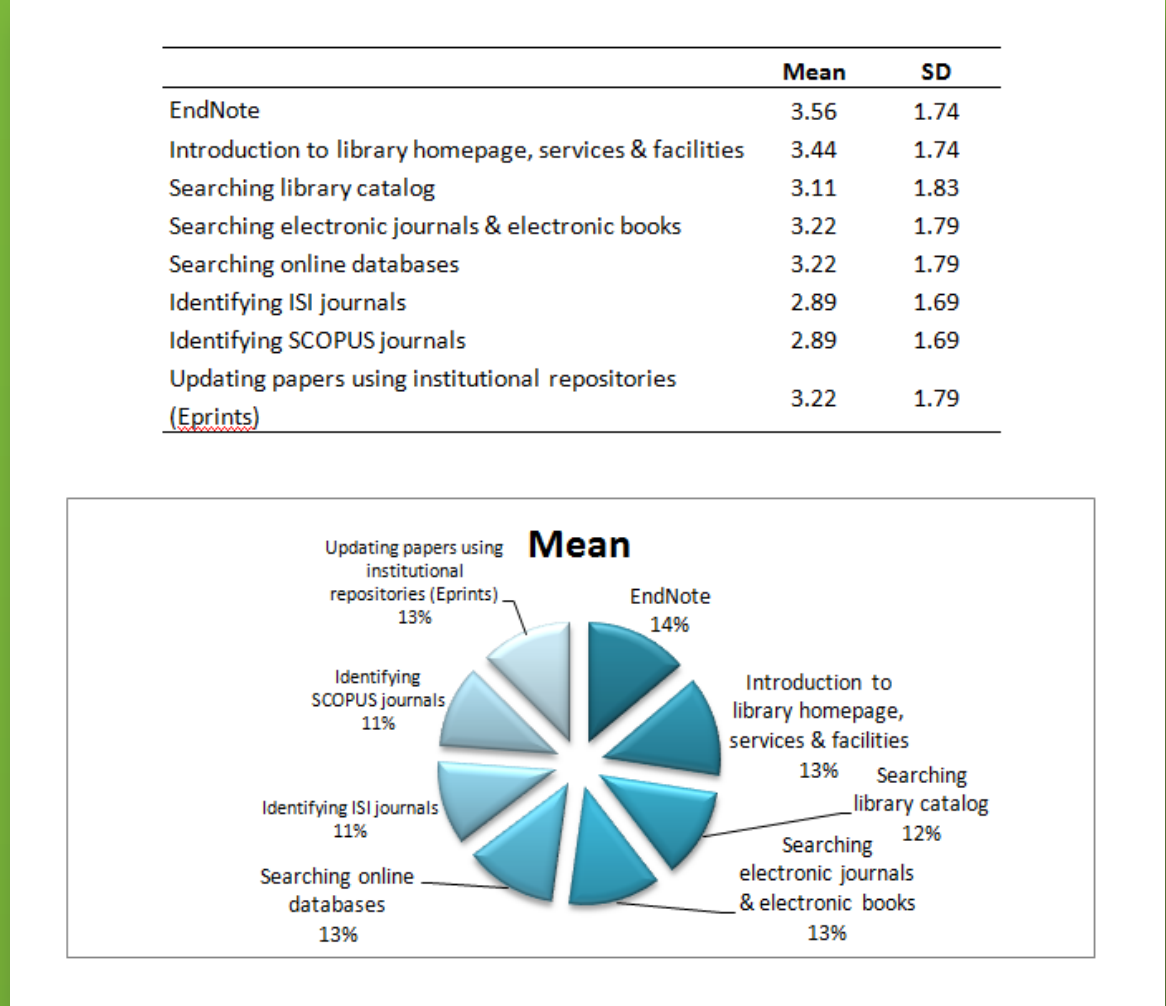


Figure 2. Mean Successfulness of Activities Offered by Library

DISCUSSION

The findings from this user satisfaction survey indicated that training sessions provided by the library are the most useful for the academicians of the Islamic Studies Academy. Assisting them to search and retrieve online information from the library web page, online databases, electronic resources and repositories seem to be important.

The area of concern is the identifying of ISI/SCOPUS journals which the library has to improve. The university has emphasized publishing in ISI/SCOPUS journals in tandem with the global university rankings and it is important that the academics from the Islamic Studies Academy are given the required assistance.

The result of this study also showed that the academicians need training on the library services. In November 2014, an informal meeting was conducted between the library and the Deputy Director of Development of Islamic Studies Academy to discuss the need for training among lecturers on library services. The sessions asked are using EndNote, searching library catalog, searching electronic journals & electronic books, searching online databases, identifying ISI journals, identifying SCOPUS journals, and updating papers using institutional repositories (Eprints). The training sessions will be scheduled and conducted in 2015.

CONCLUSION

This preliminary study was conducted to investigate the satisfaction level among academicians towards library collections, services and environment; followed by successfulness level of activities offered by library; and the helpfulness level of training sessions conducted by the librarians. Overall, it can be concluded that academicians at Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya are satisfied with library collections, services and environment. However they need training sessions to be conducted by librarians.

In August 2013, the Islamic studies library building has been completely renovated after 5 years of a landslide tragedy that affected the whole library building. The upgrading process involved the entire internal structure of the Library. The Library also has extend its services with the new look, such as, a discussion room equipped with LCD projector, 6 individual carrels, PCs for digital services, colorful pigeon holes, photocopy services, light readings area, and a service counter. It is hoped that this library environment can meet the needs of users and improve the quality of services provided.

Several attempts have been carried out. In 2014, the library has managed to increase the percentage of the reading list recommended by lecturers of 3.5% for postgraduate program. For out of print titles, the library had taken the initiative to make photocopies of materials from other libraries such as UIA, UKM and UPM through inter-library loan. To further increase the percentage of the reading list, the library intends to request materials by lecturers who teach the subject in early 2015. If they cannot supply the materials to the library, we would advise them to change titles in the reading list. By the end of October 2014, the library has arranged Islamic studies book selection activities by lecturers to meet the needs of each department's reading materials and approximately RM25000 allocation was used to buy materials that have been selected.

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