

# Malaysian Conference Collection Management in Selected Libraries : an Overview

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**Abstrak:** Makalah berusaha menghuraikan cara beberapa perpustakaan yang dipilih di Malaysia mengurus prosiding-prosiding persidangan tempatan yang diterima. 52 borang soalselidik dikirimkan kepada beberapa perpustakaan terpilih pada bulan Jun 1990. Maklumbalas berjumlah 79% (n=41) telah diterima daripada perpustakaan yang kesemuanya menyatakan menyimpan prosiding persidangan tempatan. Perpustakaan yang memberi maklumbalas memperolehi koleksi persidangan melalui beberapa cara seperti memohon secara rasmi, menerima sebagai hadiah, pembelian dan pertukaran bahan di antara perpustakaan. Kebanyakan perpustakaan menggunakan akhbar harian tempatan untuk mengesan persidangan untuk perolehan. Sebilangan kecil sahaja menyediakan indeks kepada kertas-kertas persidangan. Segelintir sahaja menyimpan statistik penggunaan bahan tersebut. 13 daripada 41 perpustakaan mengautomasikan koleksi persidangan mereka. 7 daripada 13 perpustakaan ini menggunakan perisian CDS/ISIS atau MINISIS untuk mengendalikan pengkalan data prosiding persidangan.

**Abstract:** The paper attempts to describe how selected libraries in Malaysia manage local conference proceedings. 52 questionnaire were sent out in June 1990 to selected libraries. A response rate of 79% (n=41) was obtained from libraries which all held conference proceedings. The responses indicate that responding libraries obtained their conference publications through a variety of ways such as making official requests, through gifts, purchases and maintaining exchanges amongst libraries. Most used the daily newspapers to keep track of conference publications for acquisition purposes. Only a small proportion of responding libraries provide an index to individual conference papers. Fewer still systematically keep statistics on its usage rate. 13 out of 41 automate their conference proceedings collection. 7 out of these 13 libraries uses CDS/ISIS or MINISIS to manage the conference paper database.

## Introduction

The usefulness of Malaysian conferences as the mechanism through which current information is disseminated is reflected by an increasing number of conferences held in Malaysia. An average of over 200 titles of conference proceedings are received annually by the National Library of Malaysia which is covered by the *Depository of Library Materials Act of 1986* (1) Institutions such as the University of Malaya library which aggressively solicit local conference proceedings also record similar number of titles received annually. (2) This increase in conference documentation in recent years may be due to the vibrant atmosphere revolving around local studies amongst Malaysian scholars and professionals.

Conferences are often used as the venue through which new research findings are disseminated and discussed. The problems of locating and acquiring local conference proceedings beset most libraries in Malaysia. Commercially available bibliographical tools and on-line databases which document conferences often do not cover conferences held in Developing countries adequately. As such libraries in these countries adopt various means of acquiring and handling such collections to cater for the "local interest" needs of researchers. This seems to be the case in Malaysia.

This paper attempts to describe how selected libraries in Malaysia manage local conference proceedings.

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## The Sample Study

For the purpose of finding out how libraries manage their conference publications, 52 questionnaires were sent out in Jun 1990 to selected libraries. The four page questionnaire aims at finding out the following aspects of conference proceedings management;

- i) Acquisition practice adopted by a selection of Malaysian libraries.
- ii) The processing/organizational methods used by these libraries for conference publications.
- iii) Statistics on usage rate of conference publications amongst responding libraries.
- iv) Automation practices adopted to manage this literature.

A sample of the libraries were taken from the *Panduan Perpustakaan di Malaysia = Directory of libraries in Malaysia* (3). The criteria used when choosing the sample were; a) the libraries should have a collection of about or above 15,000 and b) the library should be manned by at least one professional member of staff. The directory mentioned above does provide a list of professionals and non-professionals employed by each library. It is assumed that professionals would have a formulated policy on how to manage or handle such publications. A response rate of 79% (n=41) was obtained and all of these held conference proceedings.

### (i) Types of Libraries Responding and their Users

Table 1 indicates the type of libraries responding to the questionnaire. The table indicates that nearly half of the respondents are special libraries, that is 48.8% (n=20). The academic libraries account for 21.95% (n=9) of the total number of respondents. The public libraries account for 19.5% (n=8) and government libraries account for 9.75% (n=4) of total respondents. All respondents indicated that their libraries kept conference publications.

Table 1

Type of Libraries Responding to the Questionnaire		
Libraries	Number (n=41)	%
Public	8	19.50
Government	4	9.75
Academic	9	21.95
Special	20	48.80

### (ii) Acquisition Practices of Responding Libraries

Table 2 indicates the methods used by the various type of responding libraries to acquire conference publications. The majority of libraries obtain their collections by making official requests to organizers, that is 29 (70.7%) out of the 41 respondents. An equally large number obtain their proceedings through gifts (again 29 or 70.7% of the total respondents). 25 (61%) purchase proceedings, while 3 (7.3%) obtain materials through legal deposit. Other means of acquisition used include: staff attending conferences as presenter or participant, or through exchanges with other institutions.

Table 2

Methods of Acquisition by Type of Libraries

Methods	Libraries					%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)	Total (N=41)	
Official request to organizers	6	2	7	14	29	70.7
Gifts	4	4	7	14	29	70.7
Purchase	4	-	8	13	25	61.0
Legal deposit	1	-	2	-	3	7.3
Others	2	-	2	5	9	22.0

Table 3 indicates the sources used by the various responding libraries to keep track of conference publications for acquisition purposes. The daily newspapers emerged as an important source used for acquisition purposes (29 or 70% of the 41 respondents). The next most used source is recommendations provided by users who request proceedings. This practice is used by 27 or 66% of total respondents. Brochures and advertisements announcing proceedings ranks as the third most used source for acquiring (i.e. 25 or 61% of total respondents). About a third use accessions lists, bibliographies or book agent's catalogues. 13 or 32% out of the 41 respondents use "other" means not included in the categories listed in the questionnaire such as, through academic staff who attend conferences, faculty annual reports which announce the various conferences that academic staff go to throughout the year, and legal deposit.

Table 3

Sources Used to Keep Track of Malaysian Conference Proceedings by Type of Libraries

Sources	Libraries					Total (N=41)	%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)			
Readers' requests	3	2	8	14	27	66	
Accession's list	3	-	4	6	13	32	
Newspaper reports	6	1	8	14	29	70	
Bibliographies	-	-	5	5	10	24	
Book agents/publishers' catalogues	2	-	4	7	13	32	
Brochures	4	-	9	12	25	61	
Others	2	2	3	7	13	32	

(iii) Methods of Processing the Conference Publications by

Responding Libraries

Table 4 indicates that more than half of the total responding libraries (N=22 or 54%) integrate their conference proceedings collection with the other library collections on open access. The special and academic libraries form the majority who adopt this practice. 9 or 22% of the libraries keep the collection separately but on open access. 7 or 17% shelve this type of publication separately on closed access. The University of Malaya Library is one of the academic libraries which uses this practice. Only 3 or 7% of the 41 responding libraries integrate the proceedings with other collections which are on closed access. The table also indicates the diversity of practices adopted by the various responding libraries regarding the organization of the Malaysian conference publications.

Table 4

Type of Libraries and Method of Shelving the Malaysian Conference Publications

Sources	Libraries					Total (N=41)	%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)			
Separately on open access	2	1	2	4	9	22	
Integrated with other collection on open access	2	2	5	13	22	54	
Separately on close access	2	1	1	3	7	17	
Integrated with other collection on close access	2	-	1	-	3	7	

Table 5 shows the classification systems used by type of libraries for these conference publications. Systems used reflect the classification schemes used for the whole library collection. Only 2 or 5% of libraries arrange the proceedings separately in alphabetical sequence by conference title. The largest group, that is, 16 or 39% uses the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme, followed by the Universal Decimal Classification (12 or 29%). Only 9 or 22% out of the 41 responding libraries use the Library of Congress and this is concentrated on the academic and special libraries. 6 out of 8 of the public libraries in the sample use the Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme.

Table 5

Classification Schemes Used for the Malaysian Conference Publications by Type of Libraries

Sources	Libraries					Total (N=41)	%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)			
Dewey Decimal Classification	6	1	3	6	16	39	
Library of Congress	-	1	5	3	9	22	
Alphabetically by Conference title	1	-	-	1	2	5	
Universal Decimal Classification	1	2	-	9	12	29	
No answer	-	-	1	1	2	5	

Table 6 indicates the method used by responding libraries when processing the conference publications. More than half, that is 35 or 85% out of 41 respondents catalogue the proceedings as a set under conference title. The rest either catalogue individual papers or did not respond to this question.

Out of those who catalogue the conference proceedings as a set, 15 or 43% keep a separate index for individual papers, while 20 or 57% do not. This is indicated in table 7. Out of the 15 who responded affirmatively to keeping a separate index for individual papers, 10 or 67% are special libraries. Table 7 generally indicates that the majority of the respondents do not provide a separate index to individual papers.

From the 15 who responded "yes" to keeping a separate index for individual papers, most provide access to the following type of entries in the index in accordance to hierarchy; subject/keywords (10 or 77% out of 15); authors (8 or 61% out of 15); paper title (7 or 54% out of 15) and conference title (2 or 15% out of 15). This is indicated in table 8.

Table 6

**Method of Processing the Malaysian Conference Proceedings by Type of Libraries**

Processing Methods	Libraries					Total (N=41)	%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)			
Catalogue as a set under conference title	8	4	6	17	35	85.4	
Catalogue indiv. paper	-	-	1	2	3	7.3	
No answer	-	-	2	1	3	7.3	

Table 7

**Response of Libraries to Whether a Separate Index was Maintained for Individual Conference Paper**

Responses	Libraries					Total (N=41)	%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)			
Yes	1	3	1	10	15	43	
No	7	1	5	7	20	57	

Table 8

**The Access Points Provided by Indexes to Individual Malaysian Conference Papers by Type of Libraries**

Sources	Libraries					Total (N=41)	%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)			
Subject/keywords	1	3	1	5	10	77	
Author	1	1	1	5	8	61	
Paper title	1	1	1	4	7	54	
Conference title	1	-	1	-	2	15	
Others	1	-	-	-	1	8	

**(iv) Statistics on Success Rate of Acquiring the Malaysian**

**Conference Proceedings and Use Rate of these Publications**

All responding libraries clearly indicate that conference publications are being acquired but processed and classified in a variety of ways. The respondents were asked how they rate their success in obtaining conference publications requested for stock. Unfortunately, very few of the respondents keep records of either their success or failure rate as indicated by table 9. Only 7 or 17% out of the 41 libraries could

provide a rough estimation of their success rate. Of the two academic libraries, one rated less than 50% success rate while the other reports a more than 50% success rate. Amongst the special libraries all who keep statistics rated a more than 50% success rate in obtaining the conference publications. This may be due to the fact that special libraries have a narrower scope to cover, that is, only those proceedings relevant to their specialized field. The academic and other libraries service a wider category of users and hence needed to acquire proceedings in broader subject area.

Table 9

**Rate of Success in Obtaining Conference Publications by Type of Libraries**

Rate of Success	Libraries					Total (N=41)	%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)			
Less than 50%	-	-	1	-	1	2	
More than 50%	-	-	1	5	6	15	
No statistics kept	8	4	7	15	34	83	

Respondents were also asked whether they kept statistics of use rate of the Malaysian conference proceedings. Table 10 indicate that only 5 or 12% out of the 41 libraries responded "yes" and 36 or 88% responded "no". This may indicate the lack of awareness of the importance in keeping statistics of use to substantiate claims for further finance.

Table 10

**Response to Whether Statistics of Use are being Kept by Type of Libraries**

Responses	Libraries					Total (N=41)	%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)			
Yes	-	-	2	3	5	12	
No	8	4	7	17	36	88	

Those who responded "yes" to keeping statistics reported keeping figures on a monthly basis. This is indicated in Table 11. Two out of the 5 who responded "yes" reported usage rate of over 100 per month. It is also interesting to note that these two libraries also maintain multiple access indexes to individual conference papers.

Table 11

## Usage Rate Per Month of Conference Publications by Type of Libraries (where known)

Usage Rate per month	Libraries				
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)	Total (N=41)
Less than 50%	-	-	-	1	1
50 - 100	-	-	1	-	1
Over 100	-	-	1	1	2
No estimation	-	-	-	1	1

## (v) Automation of the Malaysian Conference Publication by

## Responding Libraries

Responding libraries were also asked whether the processing of the Malaysian conference publications were automated. Table 12 shows that only 13 or 32% responded "yes" and 28 or 68% responded "no". Most of those who responded affirmatively to automation are from special libraries but this may be due to the larger number of total respondents in this category.

Table 12

## Response to Whether the Malaysian Conference Collections are Automated by Type of Libraries

Responses	Libraries					%
	Public (N=8)	Govt. (N=4)	Acad. (N=9)	Special (N=20)	Total (N=41)	
Yes	2	1	3	7	13	32
No automation	6	3	6	13	28	68

Table 13 shows automation features in the 13 libraries who responded "yes" to automation. Description includes the software/hardware used; the database name and the creator of the database.

From table 13 it is noticeable that the software CDS/ISIS is very popular amongst libraries in Malaysia. 5 or 38% out of the 13 libraries responding "yes" to automation using this software. This is especially true for special libraries. This maybe due to the fact that it possesses certain features which are suitable for small bibliographic databases. It can be loaded on to an IBM compatible micro computers which are found in most libraries of substantial size in Malaysia. The mainframe version of CDS/ISIS is MINISIS and is used by 2 special libraries.

Table 13

## Automation Features of the Malaysian Conference Collection by Type of Libraries (As in June 1990)

Type of libraries	Software	Hardware	Database	Creator
Public (N=2)	i. VTLS	HP3000 3/956	MALMARC	National library
	ii. SEA-URICA	McDougal Douglas	-	Govt. comp. service Unit
Government (N=1)	CDS/ISIS	Micro comp. 386 tower system	ROC	Librarian
Academic (N=3)	i.DOBIS	IBM 4381	USM Cat.	Science University Library
	ii.BERLIAN	IBM 3090	BERLIAN	Institute of Advance Science, UTM.
	iii.CDS/ISIS	IBM Comp.	BKKCON	Asst. Librarian
Special (N=7)	i.CDS/ISIS	IBM Comp.	IRCI Kat	Systems Analyst & Librarian
	ii.CDS/ISIS	"	PINS	Librarian
	iii.CDS/ISIS	Olivetti M24	LIBRI	Inter-Regional Committee of Dev. Assn. (ICCCA)
	iv.TECHLIB	IBM main-frame	JT4 BDB	BASIS/TECH Vendor
	v.SISPUKOM	NEC comp.	-	-
	vi. MINISIS	HP3000	Catalogue - DB NR - DB	Librarian
	vii. MINISIS	HP3000	Palm-search Biblio	Librarian & System Analyst

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to provide comments about their future plans. Some gave useful comments to substantiate their decision with regard to the organization of the Malaysian conference publications. Table 14 provides a list of comments made by types of libraries arranged by type of comments.

Table 14

**Type of Comments Made by Responding Libraries About the Organization  
of the Malaysian Conference Publications**

Types of Comments	Types of Libraries
<b>Acquisition practices</b>	
1. This library has a few collection on taxation and are mostly acquired through gifts.	Government
2. We have a small collection of conference papers. Budget constraints do not permit us to purchase these publications.	"
3. We found <i>Index to Malaysian conferences</i> very useful.	"
4. We will try to acquire all local conference papers without putting any limitation to the amount of money spent on it.	Academic
5. We only order when requested by staff or considered essential. We intend to write our own programme using DBase III+ for the purpose of retrieval for these material.	"
6. At present we are just at the stage of organizing what (little) we have. In the near future we hope to adopt a more aggressive policy of acquiring this type of material either through gift or purchases. Automation of these material has yet to be worked out.	"
7. Acquisition policy regarding this type of material is the same as other book collection unless certain proceedings are urgently requested by management or researches.	Special
<b>Organization/processing</b>	
1. We have a separate section for the conference papers neatly titles on the cover. We make it a point to write to any organizers holding seminars of interest. Nevertheless we have very few of such materials.	Public
2. We keep our conf/seminar papers according to subject.	"
3. We arrange our conf/seminar papers by state.	"
4. The collection is separated from other reference collection and arranged according to class number and labelled "seminar paper collection".	"
5. Published proceedings are put on reference shelves and on open shelves if there are more than one copy. We will publish a list of all conference papers that are available in our library.	Academic
6. We will index each paper separately according to subject and authors for quick retrieval by users.	Special
7. The library preferred to catalogue the publications under conference title and maintain a separate index to individual papers.	"
<b>Automation practices</b>	
1. We are in the midst of converting these type of records into the TECHLIB database. We hope to get this online by the second quarter of 1991.	Special
4. In the PORIM (Malaysian Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia) we have an online information storage and retrieval system using the MINISIS software. We have developed a major database on oils and fats, palm oil/ oil palm and input all forms of literature including conferences into the BIBLIO database.	"

## Conclusion

The survey of management practices amongst selected Malaysian libraries has highlighted the diversity in handling practices and the controversy which this type of publication often portrays. Five or 38% out of the 13 libraries responding "yes" use CDS/ISIS to bibliographically manage their conference collection. For future mutual benefit it may be useful to examine the compatibility of CDS/ISIS conference databases held by the various libraries to produce a union catalogue of conference papers. The possibility of producing such a catalogue is feasible since CDS/ISIS supports importing and exporting of records between databases set up within its own system.

All the 41 responding libraries indicate the availability of conference publications in their stock. Only a small proportion of these libraries however, provide conference information at the level of subject and author access to individual papers. Very few still systematically keep statistics on the usage rate of their conference collection. This practice of evaluating the usefulness and effectiveness of acquired resources are sadly lacking amongst Malaysian libraries. It is felt that this practice when carefully monitored can be used effectively to justify claims for further expenses or to request computing equipment. An attempt towards this effort has been made

by the University of Malaya library. Through systematic acquisition policy as well as constantly monitoring usage rate of their Malaysian conference collection the university library has embarked on the exercise of indexing all Malaysian conference proceedings in stock. This was done manually at the initial stage. An attempt has been made since then to automate proceeding papers received using CDS/ISIS. In 1991 with the purchase of a turnkey system (ATLAS) conference proceedings has been indexed in a separate index database which provides facility for OPAC searching under author, title and subjects.

## References

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