

PUBLIC HOLIDAY USAGE OF THE MEDICAL LIBRARY - A Survey

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Introduction

The Medical Library of University of Malaya, has a large clientele of 4,534 registered users. They are 2,493 lecturers, doctors, para-professional clinical staff; 1,681 undergraduates; 295 postgraduates; 53 external members and 12 institutional members. The library has a heavy responsibility of providing for all their varied and specialised needs. Ready and convenient access to the library constitutes perhaps the most basic need for all categories of users.

Library usage on the whole constitutes a vital component of campus life especially when studying for examinations. The Faculty of Medicine, with its varied courses, conducts examinations at different times of the year. Hence, whilst the undergraduates are on vacation, the postgraduates would be working hard for their examinations. Besides, nurses and other para medical professionals belonging to the teaching hospital, also have a different schedule of examinations.

It is in view of the different examinations that the Medical Library has always been kept open throughout the year (with a few exceptions), regardless of whether it is semester or vacation time.

The library observes the following opening hours :

Monday - Friday	8.00 a.m. - 10.30 p.m.
Saturday	8.00 a.m. - 3.30 p.m.
Sunday	8.00 a.m. - 3.30 p.m.

In addition to this, during public holidays, when most of the nation would be resting, the staff of the Medical Library would be at the library attending to the needs of the users. For instance

in 1995, the library was kept open on 11 days out of a total of 15 public holidays. In 1996, it was kept open on 12 public holidays.

The Survey

In relation to this, a short 'One minute survey' was carried out during three public holidays. The objective of the survey was to find out the reasons why there were users in the library despite the fact that they were on holiday.

The Questionnaire

Users were given a one-page questionnaire at the entrance where they were asked to indicate their status (staff or student) before answering the questions. They were encouraged to fill the questionnaire on the spot because it was estimated that it will take only a minute to answer the questions; hence the name 'One minute survey'.

Users were asked to place a tick against one or more reasons for using the library on that particular public holiday.

Findings

The results indicate that the library was used on public holidays largely by undergraduates, followed by postgraduates. There is also a scatter of other categories of users, such as nursing students, University staff and external members.

The findings of the survey clearly indicate that the library plays an important role in providing a place to read. The reading and borrowing of open shelf books as well as newspapers appear to be in the top three list of reasons for using the library. Pleasantly surprising is the fact that those three reasons continue to top the list even after Internet services were made available.

Redspot books and photocopying have also not lost their importance. Those who had chosen 'Internet' as one of the reasons for using the library had also marked the traditional reasons such as a place to read and for borrowing books.

All the respondents were happy that the library was kept open as the majority of them did not have an alternate place of study had the library observed the public holiday.

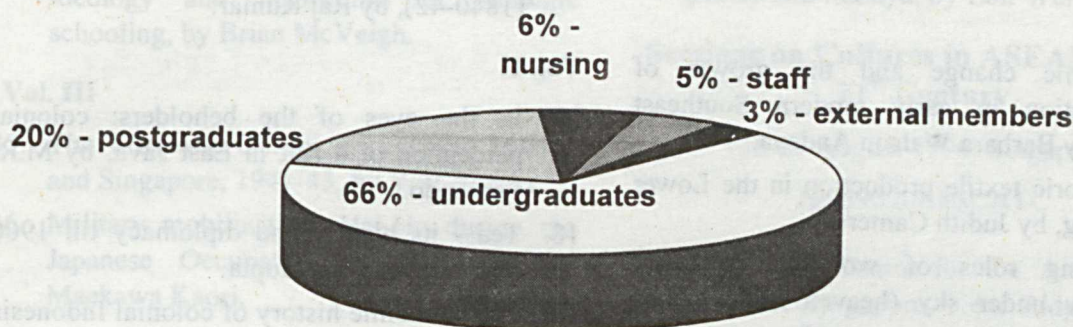


Figure 1 : Users by categories during public holidays

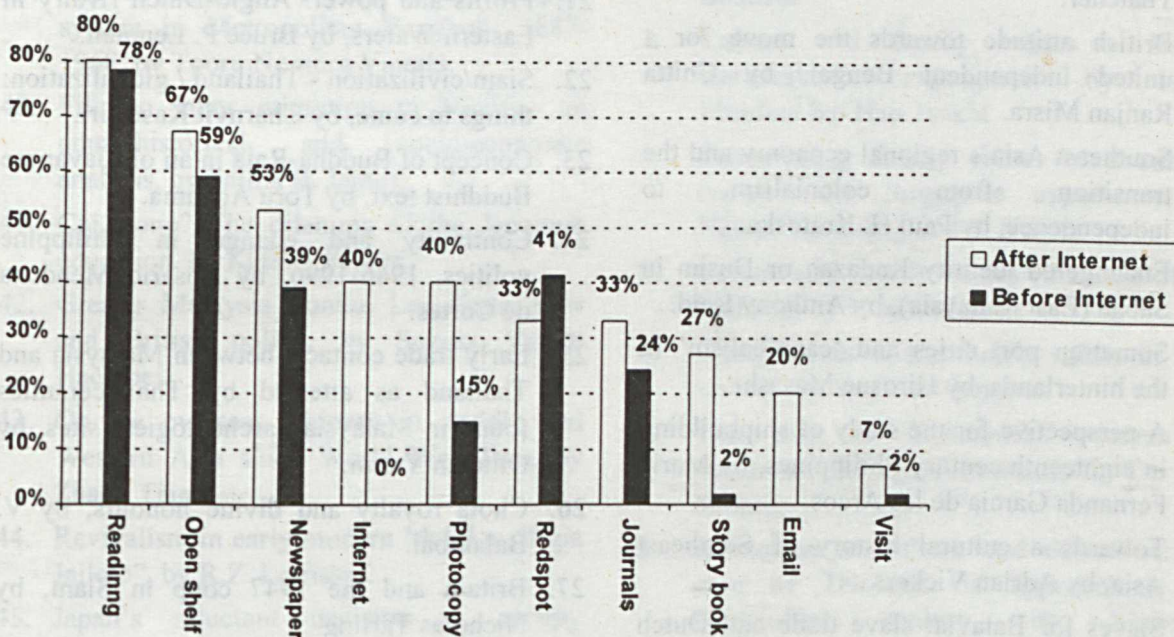


Figure 2 : Reasons for using the library during public holidays before and after Internet/Email facilities