

A Plan for the Development of the Library of Indonesia Open Learning University

Drs. Effendi Wahyono, M. Hum

Head, Universitas Terbuka Library

The Indonesian Open Learning University

e-mail: effendi@ka.ut.ac.id <http://www.ut.ac.id/>

Abstract

The Indonesia Open Learning University (Universitas Terbuka = UT) library has already established and implemented a policy to develop its collections to support the activities of Universitas Terbuka. The activities of Universitas Terbuka are based on: 1) three main purposes of any higher education institution in Indonesia (Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi = TDPT), i.e.: education, research, and service to the community; and 2) the vision of Universitas Terbuka (UT), which is to be the Center of Excellence in the area of management, research, development, and information clearinghouse in the field of distance and open higher education systems. Furthermore the library will be developed to be the electronic library so that it can give necessary services to and can be accessed by the Open University students who are all over Indonesia and even abroad.

Background

Open and distance education system seems to be the new paradigm in education and always have something to offer to everybody. Since it's history is linked to the development in communication technology, we read about the benefit that the system gets from the advances in electronic telecommunications and communication technology in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The Indonesia Open Learning University (Universitas Terbuka = UT) was established in September 1985. Currently UT has 400.000 students. The vision of Universitas Terbuka (UT) is to be the Center of Excellence in the area of management, research, development, and information clearinghouse in the field of distance and open higher education systems. The library of UT, as the learning resource and information center, should support the realization of this vision.

Referring to the above vision, the UT's library has to develop its collections as such that it can act as the research and information center in the field of distance education as well as in the fields appropriate to the programs offered by UT. The services provided by the library should be improved so that UT's students, who are all over and even outside Indonesia can benefits from those services

Currently the library collections are appropriate to provide services only for the UT staff particularly in the field of distance and open higher education system and courses offered by UT. Services to UT's students are limited for them who visit the library which is located at the UT main office in Jakarta. The students are allowed to read the library materials but they cannot borrow them.

The library collections currently are about 25.000 exemplars or 15.000 titles of books and magazines. These collections are not sufficient to support the needs of UT's 1600 staff and 400.000 students. The collections cannot reach the students who are located all over Indonesia Archipelago. To reach those students the library already established cooperation with the various library institutions, such as Network of The Indonesia National Library, local university libraries. For students who live in Java island library services are provided through the network of state university libraries. Students can check out books using their UT's student ID card. Still many students cannot benefit from the service since they live far away from the nearest library.

UT can overcome the shortage of library service by developing the electronic library systems.

Development of UT's Library

To support the vision and mission of UT's to become the center of excellence in the field of distance learning, UT's library should be developed as such that its collections can make the library be the center of research and information about distance learning, and those collections can be accessed online by the UT students or staff. The online library services are made possible by the existence of electronic information and communication network technology.

There is already an established internet facilities at UT that makes it possible to access the internet and the web. At the main office in Jakarta, UT has a well-run local area network which has proved to be beneficial to connect a lot of activities among units such as examination center, computer center, the schools, and registration center. Some of the academic staff who work in a team utilize the LAN to write research proposals and reports and to develop computer assisted instruction programs. The LAN makes it possible to access the library collections from the units at the main office. Moreover the UT's library has become a member of the State University Library Network.

However, some of these provision cannot be used by many of the staff, even by the library staff. Many of the staff are not used to utilize the network, either the internet or the LAN system.

In the future, online library services will be a necessity. To anticipate the future need of online library service, some of the UT's library collections are already entered into the network which can be accessed electronically from the local area network or from the web. The collections are in the form of catalogues of 14600 books, 1119 titles of video or audio, 400 titles of UT's learning materials, and 845 research reports. These collections can be accessed online by the name of authors, the title of the books or the name of the publishers. Through the UT's library web site, users can access or even download the full text literature materials from other libraries which are online whether in Indonesia or in the World. Since most of UT's library collectios still are in print materials, the online library data displayed in the network are in the form of bibliography. The data do not have explanation whether the literatures needed are available in the library or are already borrowed by other users.

However, the main obstacle is that computer facility or access to online facility is still a luxurious thing and unaffordable to most of UT's student. That's why UT's library will establish working cooperation with other university libraries and the regional offices (UPBJJ), to extend the library services to students at

distant places. If Universitas Terbuka can establish online facilities with the 32 regional offices, it will be feasible to develop the point of library service in each of the regional offices. The point of library service can include a mini library, an online computer facility that makes it possible for a UT's student who doesn't have a computer to access the UT's main library services and gets other library services from the mini library. Since state postal offices all over Indonesia already established computer network which can be utilized by the public to access the internet, UT's students can rent computer time to browse the web.

Problems may arise which could hamper the development of electronic library system. The main problem is economic, i.e: the limited ability of students to afford to rent computer time or to own computer. In Indonesia, computer is regarded as a very luxurious and high technology thing. Many UT students probably are not capable of utilizing computer either for data or wordprocessing or for the accessing the internet.

Another problem is the lack of ability of the library staff to manage the electronic library. Currently the library has 13 staff, four of them are loaned from other units, only five of them have at least bachelor degree, the rest have less than bachelor degree.

The development of the library will include the improvement of the collections and staff ability so the library will have appropriate collections and staff skill to support an electronic library.

Summary

The number of UT's students are 400,000 located all over Indonesia and outside Indonesia, such as France, Dutch, Saudi Arabia. To serve the distance students, UT's library will be developed to become an electronic library. The main obstacle is the limited opportunity of the students to get access to the internet because of financial or ability constraints. The library staff need to be improved both in the quality or quantity so that they will have appropriate skills to support the management of an electronic library.