

Library Services at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University

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Introduction

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) employs a distance education system that enables students to study independently at home. To facilitate and support the students' distance study, the University provides various types of academic services including of library and information services.

Library and information services are provided through the Office of Documentation and Information (ODI). As the University's central library facility, ODI is responsible for developing and managing library systems, acquiring printed and non-printed materials, organizing technical processes and procedures for classifying, cataloguing and indexing materials according to library science principles, and creating tools and finding aids to provide a variety of effective library services for its users. ODI established the STOU Library Network to provide complete library services throughout the country for STOU undergraduate and graduate students and the general public.

The Office of Documentation and Information utilizes computer systems to enhance the capacity of ODI services. In 1994, ODI installed the VTLS Library Automation System. Currently, six modules of the VTLS System are being used to handle library activities and services namely Acquisition, Cataloguing, OPAC, Circulation, Serial Control and Journal Indexing. The ODI automated library system is able to link the STOU Library Network to other networks in Thailand and overseas thus enabling ODI to provide library and information access to national and international networks.

Library and Information Services

A Model for Library and Information Services

The Office of Documentation and Information provides central, regional and provincial library and information services to benefit various target groups including STOU faculty, students and the general public

1 Central Services

Central library and information services are provided through the Office of Documentation and Information in the Documentation Building and the Academic Building I on STOU's main campus in Nonthaburi. The main purpose of the library is to make resources available to STOU faculty, staff and course teams to produce self-instructional materials and other supplement educational media. ODI also offers basic library services to STOU staff members, researchers and the general public. Students are able to use the central library facilities when they attend training seminars and activities at the University.

2 Regional Services

Regional library and information services are provided at Academic Development Service Centers and Graduate Educational Resource Centers.

Academic Development Service Center

The Thai Government allocated a budget for the University to establish ten centers in the various regions of the country. Currently, seven centers are operational in the following provinces: Nakorn Si Thammarat, Nakorn Sawan, Sukhothai, Lambang, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani and Petchaburi. Academic Development Service Centers serve as STOU library branched and provide library and information services to STOU graduate and undergraduate students and the general public. The Centers provide various educational media and materials including self-instructional media, textbooks, reference books and books of interest to the local community, video and cassette tapes, STOU educational television and radio programs, and computer-assisted instructional media (CAI).

The Center serves as a repository and service center with current library materials. In the near future, each Center will be equipped with a computer network system that will enable users to link and exchange information with the University and outside networks.

Graduate Educational Resource Centers

STOU established Graduate Educational Resource Centers to provide graduate students with complete library and educational media services which include self-instructional materials, reference books and textbooks to facilitate their academic research. In cooperation with various government agencies six centers were set up in 1993.

The National Library of Thailand under the Department of Fine Arts cooperated with the University to set up three Centers in National Library Branches in Chantaburi, Nakon Ratchasima and Chiang Mai. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration also provided cooperation which enabled STOU to set up a Center at Suan Lumpini Public Library. In cooperation with the Department of Non-formal Education, a Center was set up at Huo Hin Public Library in Prachuap Kirikhan province. The most recent center to be established is located in Tinsulanonda library in Mahawachirawut School in Songkhla province.

3 Provincial Services

Provincial Services are offered at *STOU Corners* located in 75 provincial public libraries. *STOU Corners* were established by the University in cooperation with the Department of Non-formal Education, Ministry of Education. In the Bangkok Metropolitan area, the University received cooperation and assistance in establishing *STOU Corners* at Soi Pranang, Suan Lumpini, Phasicharoen and Bang Khen public libraries. STOU also opened an additional *STOU Corner* in Songkhla province through cooperation and assistance from Tinsulanonda library at Mahawachirawut School. In addition, STOU also provides special services at Bang Kwang Correctional Facility in Nonthaburi for inmates who are students at the University.

Each STOU Corner serves as a repository and service center which is equipped with various types of selected materials and media prepared by ODI to benefit undergraduate students and the local community.

Services

The Office of Documentation and Information provides the following library and information services:

1. *Reference and information services*

Library staff members are available at each branch to assist users in locating materials and information.

2. *Loan service*

Loan services are available to STOU faculty, staff and students and those who apply for membership. The number of items on loan and the loan period varies according to the status of the borrower and the availability of the item.

3. *Inter-library loan service*

As a member of the Thai University Libraries Cooperative Project, STOU staff members and students are able to borrow materials from other academic libraries under the Ministry of University Affairs. Library materials can be borrowed upon request by filling out an interlibrary loan request form.

4. *Information access and retrieval*

The University has numerous electronic databases in various subject areas for use among STOU faculty, staff and students. Library staff are available at the Reference Desk to advise users on the most appropriate resources and how to access them.

5. *Photocopying Service*

Photocopies of materials from the library's collection may be made for a minimal fee. Graduate students may request and receive photocopied materials by mail or fax.

6. *Orientation and library visits*

Orientation for new students and an introduction to using library services are arranged once a year. The library provides assistance to STOU staff in the use of OPAC, specific databases and new library resources as well as search strategies. Library visits are also arranged for the general public upon request. STOU provides opportunities for students to attend library tours conducted while attending activities and workshops on the university campus.

The Use of Information Technology for Library and Information Services

The Office of Documentation and Information has long recognized the necessity for introducing computer and information technology to develop the library and information services. ODI uses computer and information technology for a wide range of library functions.

Information Retrieval and Data Searching

1. *On-line Dialogue*

ODI has been a data-member of Knight-Ridder Information Co., Inc. (USA) since 1986. This service provides University personnel with access to academic networks of various areas of studies.

2. *CD-ROM Databases*

ODI has subscribed to various CD-ROM databases. Currently, the databases available to University staff and students include ERIC, ADO, SIC and Laser Quest.

3. *Internet*

Through STOU's computer system, users are able to access information on the Internet at ODI.

Creation of Specific Databases

ODI has been developing its own databases since 1988. Initially, Micro CDS/ISIS software for micro-computers was used for creating databases as a research project. As a result, three databases were developed, namely Printing Technology, Telecommunication and Information Technology databases. Subsequently, more databases in different areas were created by using BRS/Search software to function as a tool to access information. Currently, ODI has databases in six areas, namely Printing Technology, Telecommunication, Information Technology, Science and Technology, Distance Education, and HM King Prajadhipok's databases.

Library Automation System

In 1994, ODI installed the VTLS library automation systems. Currently, ODI uses 6 modules of VTLS for conducting basic library tasks, namely Acquisition, Cataloguing, Circulation, OPAC, Serial Control and Journal Indexing.

As a member of the Thai Central Academic Library Network, THAILINET, the government allocated a budget to ODI in 1995 and 1996 to expand the library automation system. As a result, ODI's library automation system is able to link to various STOU systems, and the national and international institutions of higher learning, thus enabling ODI to expand its services and provide more effective and efficient library services to students through long-distance requests.

Future Plan for Library Development

According to the university plans and policy, the library network will be linked to ten Academic Development Service Centers within a few years enabling STOU students at each Center to search for data and information in ODI electronic databases via terminals installed at each center. Students will also be able to search for information from other institutions of higher learning and other information centers worldwide.

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