

Original Paper

Responsiveness of Library Resources and Services in Ensuring Students' Readiness towards ASEAN Integration

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Abstract

Academic libraries in the new millennium are leaders in knowledge management. Librarians in universities are innovative in their use of new information technologies to provide access to a range of multimedia sources. Today's libraries teach students the information handling skills to last a lifetime. As the heart of the educational institution, the SPUP University library has a vital role to provide the necessary resources for the learning and research needs of its clients. Thus, this study was conducted to look into the responsiveness of SPUP library resources and services to ensure students' readiness towards ASEAN integration. The results of the study clarified the extent of utilization of the library resources and availing of the services rendered. Likewise, the skills and competencies of the academic librarians which are needed to facilitate and foster involvement in the initiatives to be undertaken to strengthen the students' readiness towards ASEAN integration were elicited from the respondents. Findings revealed that students' utilization of library resources and services is to a great extent. Moreover, the library skills and competencies in the ASEAN integration among SPUP librarians is high. Meanwhile, the students chose to create library flyers and brochures for the promotion of the ASEAN integration as one of the prioritized initiatives to be implemented by the SPUP library to strengthen students' readiness towards ASEAN integration.

Keywords

library resources, services, ASEAN integration, students readiness, academic libraries

1. Introduction

The past five decades saw the transformation of the economic landscape of Southeast Asia. Economic growth, demographic transitions, and regional cooperation reshaped these Southeast Asian countries. The Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) says these all. Its flagship plan, the ASEAN 2015, aims to have a region of Southeast Asian nation, outward-looking and living in peace, stability, and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and a community of caring society (ILO and ADB, 2014; Palisoc, 2014; Pasion, 2015). It thus speaks of an ASEAN Community that is expressed in its three development areas Community Blueprints: Economic (AEC), Political Security (APSC), Socio Cultural (ASCC) (Letchumanan, 2015). Under the Socio-Cultural (ASCC) blueprint, a significant adjustment in the entire higher education academic system is required to open up to students from the different member nations (Mishra & Mishra, 2015). The ASEAN higher education institutions' mission is to produce graduates of international quality equipped with professional skills, language skills, and intercultural skills. Accordingly, closer cooperation in education and human resource development will empower the people in the ASEAN region and strengthen the ASEAN Community (Reddy, Waiyahong, & Teimtinakrit, 2013). Guided by the ACC Blueprint, The Philippines' Commission on Higher Education (CHED), is working hard toward achieving a harmonized higher education environment in the region (Pasion, 2015). This is reflected in the CHED's initiative policy framework for the "Internationalization of Higher Education, inclusion of more Philippine universities in the ASEAN University Network (AUN), participation in the ASEAN International Mobility of Students (AIMS) Program, and the development of a better credit transfer system and diploma supplement which will enable the comparability of Philippine higher education with those of other countries" (Castillo, 2014). This internationalization of higher educational institutions increases cultural diversity. As these nationals from ASEAN mingle with their Filipino counterparts, they influence and get influenced as well, resulting in a mixed cultural environment. The fact that the Philippines is peopled by at least seventy seven (77) major ethnic groups, each having its own cultural and linguistic traditions (Jocano, 1998; Nash & King, 2008) bring out the complexity of culture as a thick frame that connects individuals and establishes different kinds of relationships. Nowhere is this more evident than in academic libraries. When these diverse faculty and students gravitate to libraries for library resources, services, thrusts, and initiatives, they demonstrate their much-needed skills and competencies for the delivery of their excellent services (Bertot, McClure, Jaeger, & Ryan, 2006).

A library is a collection of sources, resources, and services, and the structure in which it is housed; it is organized for use and maintained by a public body, an institution, or a private individual. It can mean the collection itself, the building or room that houses such a collection, or both. The term 'library' has itself acquired a secondary meaning: "a collection of useful material for common use." This sense is used in fields such as computer science, mathematics, statistics, electronics, and biology. It can also be used by publishers in naming a series of related books (Shukla, Singh, & Mishra, 2013).

Esposito-Betan (2015) emphasized that the greatest asset of any library lies in the quality of its collection.

However, it is noted that no library is complete on its own, or no library is self-sufficient. A certain library may be strong in engineering resources. However, it will be difficult if a researcher is comparing the engineering practices in the Philippines from that of the other ASEAN countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. Library cooperation and resource sharing has been the librarians' solution to such a problem. In this area, the 2015 Integration opens a great opportunity for ASEAN libraries to cooperate and benefit. Library cooperation and resource sharing is not something new for the ASEAN region. The ASEAN University Network Inter-Library Online (AUNILIO) was established in 2002 and currently has twenty-three university library members, three of which are from the Philippines. It aims to enhance information networking through the sharing of digital scholarly resources and develop an ASEAN virtual university. AUNILIO is just one of the many networks Philippine libraries are currently engaged in. With the ASEAN Integration to take place by the end of 2015, it is expected that such library linkages and resource sharing programs among various libraries in the ASEAN will greatly increase and improve.

To excel in the 21st-century workforce, individuals need to think creatively to solve problems, collaborate across multiple networks, communicate effectively using a wide range of media, and demonstrate an entrepreneurial attitude toward the work. Not only are the requisite skill sets for success changing, but the demand for employees with advanced degrees is also accelerating.

According to the ASEAN Charter, closer cooperation in education and human resource development will empower the people of ASEAN and strengthen the ASEAN Community. The ASEAN higher education institutions' mission to produce graduates of international quality equipped with professional skills, language skills, and inter-cultural skills. The establishment of the ASEAN Community 2015 inevitably affects ASEAN communities in every aspect. All the members have to prepare themselves not only for being a good member of the ASEAN Community but also for utilizing the ASEAN Community. Besides, all of the related processes will lead to the exchange of knowledge bodies, languages, traditions, and culture. University librarians act as liaisons between the library and various academic departments within the institutions. They must be able to engage with faculty to assist them in both scholarly research and curriculum development (Hardy & Corral, 2007).

In the last two decades, academic libraries throughout the world are undergoing great change. ASEAN is no exception. Thus, the competencies of the workforce in academic libraries, with a particular focus on a content analysis of skills required are in need. The Librarian is continued to be important in the organization. Components of the old skill set are no longer valuable to the present-day library professionals. Dramatic retooling is required for the library staff because there will be a diminished role for "teaching and learning" in the 2020 university. The role of Academic Librarians will change to more of an "informationist" (with a focus on big data) and a "collaborationist" (connecting researchers with other researchers, grant funding, etc.).

Academic libraries implement initiatives to strengthen students' readiness towards ASEAN integration in higher educational institutions. As the heart of the institution, the SPUP University library has been

supporting education efforts by providing teaching, learning, and research resources and excellent services to its clients. Through this research endeavor, the librarians' skills and competencies shall be examined and thereby enhanced.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed at assessing the responsiveness of SPUP library resources and services in ensuring students' readiness towards ASEAN integration. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions.

- 1) What are the resources and services offered at the SPUP library to ensure students' readiness towards ASEAN integration?
- 2) To what extent are the resources and services of the SPUP University library utilized by the students?
- 3) To what extent do academic librarians manifest the needed skills and competencies in ASEAN libraries?
- 4) Is there any significant difference in the utilization of ASEAN library resources and the skills of ASEAN academic librarians when they are grouped according to profile variables?
- 5) What other initiatives can be implemented to strengthen students' readiness towards ASEAN integration?

2. Methodology

The descriptive survey method through a survey questionnaire was utilized in gathering the needed data in this research endeavor. A self-made questionnaire composed of three parts: Library Resources and Services, Librarians Skills and Competencies, Activities for the Promotion and Marketing of the Library. The respondents of the research study were students of the different schools of St. Paul University Philippines. The distribution of the study participants is shown in Figure 1. The organized data were presented using the mean. Test of hypothesis was done using the Analysis of Variance.

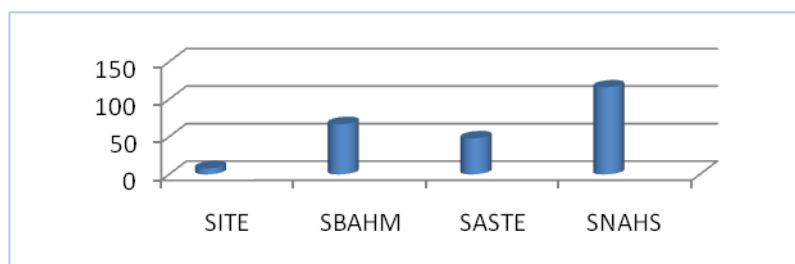


Figure 1. Study Participants

3. Results

I. SPUP Library Resources and Services that Promote ASEAN Integration

St. Paul University Philippines library has been equipped with numerous volumes of resources in

different formats. Print resources include the following: General collection, General References, and World-Bank-Knowledge for Development Special Collections. A sufficient number of CDs, DVDs, and other materials that combine sound and visual images are likewise in place in the library. Online databases of journals, periodicals, theses and dissertations, and other articles were subscribed to meet the demands of 21st-century education and the era of ASEAN integration. An ASEAN corner highlighting the collections of books and journals of the ASEAN-member countries is maintained for the learning and research needs of students. The marketing and promotion of all these resources for its maximization is manifested in the innovative services delivered by the library personnel.

Library's responsiveness to ensure students' readiness towards cultural diversity and ASEAN integration is exhibited in the direct interaction between the librarian and the user called public services (Evans & Carter, 2009). In the University, instruction and information services involve giving orientation and assistance to students, training on the use of electronic databases. An updated Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) that identifies resources appropriate for the study is maintained. OPAC provides a faster, easier, and more efficient means for searching and acquiring information.

Table 1. Extent of Utilization of Library Resources and Services

Library Resources	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
<i>Online Academic Research Collection</i> (abstracts/full texts of theses, dissertations, student researches, etc.)	4.15	Great Extent
<i>Audio Visual Materials</i> —(CDs, DVDs, and other materials in the library that combine sound and visual images)	3.80	Great Extent
<i>Pro Quest</i> —(other online database of journals, periodicals, and other articles)	4.12	Great Extent
<i>E-periodicals</i> —(electronic copy of back issues of newspapers such as Manila Bulletin, PDI, and Philippine star_	4.15	Great Extent
<i>General collections</i> —(foreign authored books)	4.01	Great Extent
<i>General References</i> —(dictionaries, Encyclopaedias, Manuals, Handbooks, etc.)	4.40	Very Great Extent
<i>World Bank Special Collections</i> —(books at the KDC)	4.32	Very Great Extent
<i>Library website</i> —(latest updates of library activities and online resources/databases which are linked and can be easily accessed)	4.07	Great Extent
<i>ASEAN Corner</i> (special collection of books/journals for the ASEAN-member countries)	3.84	Great Extent
Over-all Mean	4.09	Great Extent

As reflected in the table, the General References section of the SPUP library which comprise of the dictionaries, encyclopedias, manuals, handbooks, yearbooks, and the World-Bank Special Collections were utilized by the students to a very “Great Extent” with a mean of 4.40 and 4.32 respectively. Other resources and services like the Online Academic Research Collection, Audio-Visual Materials, ProQuest, E-periodicals, and ASEAN Corner were utilized and availed to a “Very Great Extent”.

Indeed, in this age, technology-driven information access and retrieval, the use of e-books, e-journals available should be easy. This finding gives credence to Littman’s (2004) pronouncement that academic libraries nowadays are changing from being merely warehouses to becoming information portals with the use of e-resources.

Table 2. Manifestation of the Needed Library Skills and Competencies in ASEAN Integration Among Librarians and Libraries

Skills and Competencies	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Provide intellectual access to library information in any format.	4.03	High
2. Organize and structure information in the library.	3.32	Moderate
3. Evaluate available sources of information.	3.96	High
4. Ensure the preservation of information in the academic Libraries.	3.85	High
5. Offer instruction and assistance in interpretation and access of library resources and services resources.	3.89	High
6. Think creatively to solve problems related to library use.	4.02	High
7. Collaborate and establish networks among libraries and organizations.	3.95	High
8. Work effectively with administrators, faculty, staff and students to facilitate library use.	4.31	Very High
Over-All Mean	3.92	High

As assessed by the students, the librarians have a very high level of skill in working with administrators, faculty, staff, and students to facilitate library use. Working or lobbying with school administrators is a necessary skill for librarians. Administrators’ support for training the librarians and for providing financial support for the purchase of library facilities and pay-out of library services.

The librarians were assessed to have “high” level of skills in terms of the provision of intellectual access, evaluation, and preservation of library information. Furthermore, they have high level of skills in offering instruction and assistance for interpretation, access of library resources and services. They

also have high level of skills in collaborating and establishing networks with other libraries and organizations.

The librarians were assessed to have a moderate level of skill in terms of organizing and structuring library information. This library skill entails expertise in the use of information technology as digitization is necessary for the organization and structuring these library resources.

Table 3. On the Significant Difference Students' Assessment on the Utilization of ASEAN Library Resources and the Skills of ASEAN Academic Librarians When They Are Grouped according to Course

Variables	School	Mean	SD	Computed Value	Probability Value	Decision at $\alpha=0.05$
Utilization of the Library Resources	SITE (n=8)	3.72	0.75	3.34	0.02	Reject Null Hypothesis
	SASTE (n= 48)	4.04	0.44			
	SBAHM (n= 67)*	3.73	0.76			
	SHS (n= 116)*	4.00	0.66			
Skills of the Librarians	SITE (n=8)	3.93	0.69	1.24	0.29	Accept Null Hypothesis
	SASTE (n= 48)	4.12	0.52			
	SBAHM (n= 67)	3.98	0.63			
	SNAHS (n= 116)	4.16	0.67			

As presented in the table, there is a significant difference in the students' extent of use of the ASEAN library resources. The Table further shows that the SASTE and SHS students have a higher extent of use of the ASEAN library resources than those in the SBAHM and the SITE department. The table further shows that the students have the same level of assessment on the skills of the librarians in managing the ASEAN library resources.

Table 4. Initiatives to be Implemented by the SPUP Library to Strengthen Students' Readiness Towards ASEAN Integration

Initiatives	Frequency	Percentage
1. Put up ASEAN displays and exhibits	210	87.87
2. Conduct ASEAN forum among students	180	75.31
3. Create library flyers and brochures for the promotion of the ASEAN integration	216	90.38
4. Provide handouts about the ASEAN–member countries	197	82.43
5. Conduct educational contests/games about the ASEAN integration	201	84.10

As gleaned from the table, the first three initiatives that have to be prioritized and implemented by the SPUP library as clamored by the respondents are: creating library fliers and brochures for the promotion of the ASEAN integration, putting up ASEAN displays and exhibits, and conducting educational contests/games about the ASEAN integration. This result supports the findings of Pasion (2015) that promotions and marketing services of the libraries where it identifies, anticipates, and supplies customer requirements efficiently is evitable. The goal of creating an ASEAN identity involves preserving and promoting ASEAN cultural heritage and living traditions, as a vehicle to better understand the link between culture and development, and as a source of inspiration for future endeavors. Puts up displays and exhibits on cultural practices and traditions was ranked the highest. Library displays provide access and increase understanding and familiarity of cultural and informational resources. It can draw attention to the library that often goes unnoticed. Research on the impact of displays in libraries shows raised circulation suggesting that these help in borrower's choice and encourage users to try new types of books. Displays are recommended as an integral part of reader development and book promotion.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The current state of academic libraries and the issues they face in this era of ASEAN integration continue to be crucial to the core processes of learning, teaching, and research. The key library structures, processes, services, and staff roles must evolve to accommodate the changes occurring in publishing and communications. Libraries must actively embrace the changes in the information environment to stay relevant. Libraries must be integral to the learning, teaching, and research activities to assert their continuing value to the institution. All these changes, trends, and new developments imply new competencies, new skills, new knowledge to be demonstrated by librarians.

St. Paul University's responsiveness of the Library resources and services to the students' readiness towards ASEAN integration needs a more aggressive push. The resources were available in the

university library, however, marketing and promotion of these resources is a vital need for students' maximization. SPUP librarians have to be re-engineered as to their skills and competencies to create innovative ways in promoting and implementing initiatives to strengthen students' readiness towards ASEAN integration.

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