This paper discusses the finding of qualitative and quantitative data analysis on e-book selection practices in Malaysia. The qualitative analysis indicates that the common selection practises of e-book in Malaysian academic libraries are accessibility, relevance, accuracy, subject coverage, archival facilities, MARC & METADATA record, the price, download and printing ability, full text, usage statistics, year coverage, after sales services and maintenance fees. The practises are quite similar from the study found in quantitative approach. The respondents perceived themselves moderately high in collection features, user friendliness and support distance education. The results will be used by the library management in providing the best e-resources (e-book, e-journal and other e-information) for graduates to succeed in their learning curve. This is aligned with Digital Malaysia programme, which was designed to promote the pervasive use of ICT which can improve livelihood of society. Furthermore, librarians may help in sustaining the education system in a holistic approach by working with library stakeholders regardless of differences in visions in transforming the nation towards a developed country by 2020.

Keywords: e-book selection practices, collection features, user friendliness, support distance education

1.0 Introduction

The trend of selection reading material in the acquisition department in Malaysian academic libraries has changed when electronic resources are introduced. e-Book and e-journal have become vital references among students and researchers. Public and private universities in Malaysia provide e-book services in their campus libraries. e-Book has become the main agenda in the collection development for some university libraries, especially to those with university status.

This paper presents the findings of a study on the common practices of the e-book selection among collection development officers in Malaysian academic libraries. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1.1 To investigate what are the common e-book selection practices among academic librarians in Malaysia

1.2 To examine the perception on the common practice of e-book selection practices (collection feature, user friendliness and support distance education) among academic librarians in Malaysia.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Collection features

e-Book collection features will focus on its ability to interoperate with other institutional services such as library management systems, virtual learning environments and managed learning environments. Most companies supply free Machine Readable Catalog (MARC) records for
integration into the library Online Public Access to Catalog (OPAC) (Vasileiou, Hartley & Rowley, 2009). In supporting evidence, Connaway (2001) reported that many libraries have found that within three weeks of integrating e-book MARC records into the online public access catalog (OPAC), circulation triples for e-book titles.

### 2.2 User friendliness

The main aspects of user friendliness of e-book will be on interfaces, linkages, download facilities, ease of use, download and printing option. Vasileiou, Hartley and Rowley (2009) have demonstrated that the adoption of e-book as a learning resource has significant consequences most immediately for academic libraries. It poses a range of collection development issues associated with acquisition policies and processes; licensing models and arrangements; downloading, printing and other use restrictions; and cataloging processes. Meanwhile, its interface has always been well liked, the screen being clear and not overly “busy” (Wilkins, 2007).

### 2.3 Support distance education

e-Book is accessible to distance learners. The nature of this reference material which can be read online help those at remote areas in learning process. Diez and Bravo (2009) further discussed on what European Higher Education Area (EHEA) have done in encouraging the use of monographs in electronic format through training takes on yet greater importance, when it is kept in mind that e-books will have a crucial role in the new model for education. It will be essential for teachers' research activities and for the learning efforts of undergraduate and postgraduate students, as also for the distance education models which are increasingly in use.

### 3.0 Methodology

All the librarians in academic libraries at public and private universities in Malaysia were selected as the study population (N=730). The libraries’ websites were studied to identify the librarians who are in charge of acquisition department, reference and automation department. The researcher adopted concurrent embedded strategy of mixed method, the mixing of the data from the two methods is often to integrate the information and compare one source with the other, and accomplished each other. This method is used to gain broader perspectives and to enrich the description of the sample participants (Creswell, 2009). A questionnaire as the main instruments in quantitative approached was designed on a 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale and was distributed to professional librarians who are dealing
with e-book using stratified sampling. Ten professional librarians (L#1 to L#10) were chosen to participate in the interview pertaining to their practices in e-book selection.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Qualitative Analysis

Most informants are concerned with user’s need and will negotiate with vendor regarding the price offered. They also take the initiative to compare price structured offered to other library besides looking at currency, relevancy, accessibility, and subject coverage. As the informant said that:

“...The selection is based on the need, the lecturer will propose and we process the purchasing... In doing selection of e-book we begin with negotiating. We compare the price offered with other libraries... During the selection process we will give focus on currency, relevancy, accessibility, subject coverage, price and priority of the item...” (L#2).

Another informant added other considerations such as year coverage, number of titles offered in the packages, archival facilities, IP range, MARC and METADATA record;

“...Our main concern in e-book selection are: subject coverage, year coverage, number of titles being offered, cost, archival facilities, accessibility (EZ proxy example from Springer, ebrary), password (example from Net Library that is 1 title 3 viewer at one time), IP range, MARC and Metadata record...” (L#4).

The informant also looked at the kind of purchasing mode that has been offered, maintenance fees, after sale services, training provided and usage statistics; he/she noted that;

“...The selection is made based on the needs, price, subject covered, identifying whether the selection is a one-time purchase or subscription, and monitoring the maintenance fees for some of the e-books which are meant for parking in the server from the vendor. The fee is payable annually and some vendors would waive their maintenance fees and normally they will be the preferred choice when it comes to our decision making. Another consideration which we will look into is the after sales services and the training provided. Suppliers would take the vendors to us and the vendours will provide training for the staff including the lecturers...” (L#5)

Other priorities given by the informant is the full text version of the e-book, as one of them indicated;

“...Selection will be based on the need and price. We will negotiate with the vendor if the cost is quite high. The currency is not the priority. The other consideration is the full text version.
We exclude the maintenance fees in purchasing. We normally faced the problem of accessibility... “L#6

However, one of the informant said that;

“...Our (the library’s) policy is getting lenient now – for as long as there is a need and relevance to the requests, with agreement from the committee, it would be sufficient (in decision making and approval). The library would still subscribe to online resources which may be pricy despite the possibility of having low usage and minimum student ratio. Nevertheless, the subscription will be terminated if the usage statistics produce negative outcome...” (L#7).

Another initiative shown by the informant is comparing the price with printed book, he/she revealed that;

“...We will do a thorough check in the selection and purchasing of e-books by comparing the prices between the printed copies to the online version, also by scrutinising the frequency of usage on the printed titles to the electronic version. If prices for two copies of printed titles are higher than purchasing the electronic version, then purchase of the electronic version is preferable with accessibility for simultaneous users. However, the users are greatly concerned on the accessibility to download or print the electronic materials...” (L#9).

Accessibility seems to be the most consideration being made in the e-book selection, as the informant disclosed;

“...In making the selection of e-book, priorities will be given on the needs of subject matter and accessibility. The main focus of accessibility is on unlimited access which is the most preferred type because of its unlimited accessibility period. In the case of having to make purchase for the e-books, we prefer the pick-and-choose mode. Despite having no qualms about purchasing under the package mode, we have to be selective because some of the titles are irrelevant to meet some of our needs..” (L#10).

The finding from a qualitative study revealed that the common practises that have been considered in e-book selection in Malaysian academic libraries, are accessibility, sustainability, collection features, user friendliness and cataloguing e-structure. Perhaps library planners will consider all these practices in designing their collection development policy for e-book. The subsequent sections discuss the findings from the quantitative analysis.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis
4.2.1. Reliability Analysis

The three variables of interest in this study are measured by the respective aggregated mean of items. The number of items for each variable ranges from 4 to 6 (Table 1). The reliability test results indicate that User Friendliness (0.888), Support Distance Education (0.885) and Collection Features (0.882), have a high internal consistency, thus satisfying the validity assumption of the items in the respective dimensions.

Table 1: Results of Reliability Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Collection Features</td>
<td>0.882</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>User friendliness</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Support distance education</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2 Librarians’ Perception on Collection Features

The mean scores in Table 2 also indicates that on the average, the respondents have perceived themselves moderately high regarding collection features in e-book selection. They also perceive themselves relatively high (6.26 to 6.07) regarding four items on collection features (My library considers the full text version of e-book in the selection process to My library considers the price of e-book in the selection process).

Table 2: Result of Means Scores by Collection features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDeviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My library considers the full text version of e-book in the selection process</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My library considers the content relevancy of e-book in the selection process</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My library considers the content accuracy of e-book in the selection process</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My library considers the price of e-book in the selection process</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e-Book provides an opportunity for librarian to offer the academic community what they want which is direct access to full-text content (Connaway & Wicht, 2007). In this study, the librarians’ perception on dimension of collection features is relatively high (M=6.16). Their perception on considering the full text version of e-book in the selection process has the highest mean score of (6.26). This is consistent with the studies conducted by Tenopir, Baker and Robinson (2002) that revealed bibliographic records without linked full text will usually be ignored. In another finding, Soules (2009) reported that in most cases the information available is bibliographic, factual or numeric, but full text databases are becoming more and more important. The librarians may consider the full-text features as one
of the main priorities in their selection process. The e-titles with only the abstracts could be discarded. The librarians have to be more selective, to make sure they offer the best to their users.

In other cases, the librarians’ perception on considering the content relevance and content accuracy of e-book in the selection process was also relatively high with a mean score of 6.19 and 6.15 respectively. Meanwhile, Letchumanan and Tarmizi (2011) found that the success of e-book adoption is largely dependent upon the implementation of an educational model which addresses the learner's needs and the content relevancy of the e-book for a particular course. Aspects on content relevance and accuracy should be the main focus on e-book selection process, as both of these considerations are associated with the quality and timeliness of the information in the e-book. The librarian may get help from faculty members or academicians to assist in the selection. Normally the liaison librarian officer with the respective faculty may identify the right subject specialist to look into the matter. As a result, the library is able to build a strong library e-collection.

### 4.2.3 Librarians’ perception on User Friendliness

The mean scores in Table 3 also indicates that on the average the respondents have perceived themselves moderately high regarding the user friendliness in e-book selection. Among the seven statements, the respondents perception were relatively high regarding the four items measured ranging from 6.32 to 6.01 (My library provides e-book that has simple access interface for novice user to My library provides e-book that allows download facility). The respondents perceived themselves moderately high (5.99 to 5.56) regarding the other three statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDeviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My library provides e-book which has simple access interface for novice user</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library provides e-book which has sophisticated features for expert users</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library provides e-book which has external link to related context of the content</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library provides e-book which allows download facility</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library provides e-book which is easy to conduct a search</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library provides e-book which takes less time in searching</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library provides e-book which has print option</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Librarians’ perceptions on e-book has simple access interface for novice user; e-book has sophisticated features for expert users; e-book which has external link to related context of the content; and e-book which allows download facility are relatively high with mean score of 6.32, 6.08, 6.02, and 6.01 respectively. This implies that librarians are aware of the e-book interfaces which are helpful to their users.

Subsequently the e-books will be popular among researchers, students and academicians. This is parallel to the studies done by Wu and Chen (2011), who reported that librarians are recommended to organise e-books in an appropriate way in order to help readers locate and find e-books easily. Negotiations with publishers or vendors to decrease the constraints in downloading and printing can provide students better e-book services. User-friendly interfaces would encourage students to take advantage of e-books.

4.2.4 Librarians’ Perception on Support Distance Education

The mean score in Table 4 shows that on the average, the respondents have perceived themselves moderate high regarding support distance education in e-book selection. They perceived themselves relatively high (6.00) on My library considers purchasing e-book because its around-the-clock access for remote users. They perceived themselves moderately high (5.95 to 5.76) regarding the four items (My library considers purchasing e-book because it enriches the lifelong learning academic programs; My library considers purchasing e-book because it meets distance learner’s unique needs; My library considers purchasing e-book because it meets distance learner’s needs in fulfilling course assignment; My library considers purchasing e-book because it meets teaching needs of distance learners and My library considers purchasing e-book because it serves remote users).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDeviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My library considers e-book because its around-the-clock access for remote users</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library considers e-book because it enriches the lifelong learning academic programs</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library considers e-book because it meets distance learner’s unique needs</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library considers e-book because it meets distance learner’s needs in fulfilling course assignment</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library considers e-book because it meets teaching needs of distance learners</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My library considers e-book because it serves remote users</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Librarians’ overall perception on e-book support distance distance are moderately high (M=5.89). This indicates that they might agree with Rothman (2008) that if ever a
promising technology existed for education and distance learning in particular it would be e-books. In addition to that the librarians are aware that distance learners could have the advantages of e-books to help them in their studies. Their perception on e-books offer round-the-clock access for remote users in the dimension of support distance education is relatively high (M=6.00). In parallel findings, Jamali, Nicholas and Rowland (2009) and Chu (2003) concluded that the main attraction of e-book is that it is more accessible than print books and around the clock availability. Distance learners may also refer to adult learners who are studying part time. According to Wijetunge (2000), lifelong learning is the learning process achieved throughout one’s life. The finding of librarians’ perception on e-book enriches the lifelong learning is moderately high (M=5.95). This implies that the local librarians are trying their best in helping distance learners to access the e-book resources. In a similar finding, Rao (2004) raised that the librarians will support the distance learners by providing e-books which offer equal access to learning materials to both campus-based and distance-learning students.

5.0 Conclusion

There are aspects which are also being looked at by librarians in Malaysian academic libraries. The chosen e-books must reflect the information needs and wants of the library service community. This require at least some cost-benefit consideration. The findings revealed that collection features were rank relatively high by the librarians. The results will be used by the library management in providing the best e-resources (e-book, e-journal and other e-information) for graduates to succeed in their learning curve. This is aligned with Digital Malaysia programme, which was designed to promote the pervasive use of ICT for the well-being of society. Furthermore, librarians may help in sustaining the education system in a holistic approach by working with library stakeholders regardless of differences in visions in transforming the nation towards a developed country by 2020. In the nut shell, the librarians will realise that their investment in education is boundless especially by providing e-book services to the users. The availability of current information within e-resources will create a knowledge-based society and this serves as a pre-requisite for attaining prosperity and stability in our country.
References


Book theft is a major security issue in libraries, particularly in academic libraries, with special collections being the most targeted materials, (Bello, 1998; Olorunsola, 1981). A study conducted by Olorunsola (1987) on academic library security discovered a relationship between high rates of security problems and the growth of the university. Not all thefts are committed by patrons. Some library staff take materials from the library without checking them out.