CHAPTER III  
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in order to achieve the objectives of this study. The purpose of this study was to obtain information on the current level of provision of library services for visually impaired persons (VIPs) in Malaysia by public libraries and libraries specialising in services for the visually impaired.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current status of the provision of library services for VIPs by public libraries and libraries specialising in library services for VIPs in Malaysia, in terms of the provision of materials, equipments, services, and the management of their libraries?

2. For libraries with provision of library services for VIPs, what are the problems faced by them, and what are the factors that facilitated the provision of this service? and

3. For public libraries without provision of library services for VIPs, what are the factors that hinder them from providing this service?

3.1 Research Method

In choosing the research method that would best fulfil the purpose of this study and answer the research questions most effectively, it is felt that a survey research method would be most appropriate.
From the various types of survey methods, the mail or postal survey would be the main method used. This will be followed by a telephone interview if it is deemed necessary to obtain or clarify information. The reason that a postal survey was chosen was because it was felt that a postal survey provides more time for the respondents to complete the survey. The reason why this is an important factor would be because some of the questions posed in the questionnaire require statistical data which some respondents may have to search for. A postal survey is also cost efficient since the sample of the population was located all around the country.

Besides the survey method, a visit to the MAB library was also conducted to find out more about the provision of library services for VIPs.

3.2 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed to ensure that the 3 research questions would be answered. The questionnaire was made available in two languages, English (see Appendix A) and Bahasa Melayu (see Appendix B). It is divided into 8 parts (Part A to Part H) and includes 39 questions in total. The formats of the questions are both closed and open-ended, depending on the purpose of the questions.

The topics covered in Part A to Part E of the questionnaire was to a certain extent based on the topics covered in the research conducted by Craddock (1985) and LISU (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000). Part A of the questionnaire relates to library materials in the library’s collection which are in an accessible format for VIPs. The accessible format library materials in question are large print books, Braille books, talking books, talking magazines, and talking newspapers. Part B of the questionnaire seeks to find out about the library’s production of accessible format library materials. Part C is about library
equipments suitable for VIPs. The list of equipments in Question no. 11 was not based on any particular list from other research. However, the list was compiled based on the overall literature review conducted and it was felt that the equipments listed were the most general that could be available in a library. Part D relates to library services for VIPs. Questions included in this part pertain to the training of staff, the cataloguing of accessible format library materials for VIPs, interlibrary loan services, mobile library services, and postal services. Questions on the provision of library concessions and easy access to building facilities are asked in Part E.

Two parts of the questionnaire, Part F and Part G, were not based on any previous research. This was because there were none found focusing on the problems and facilitating factors in the provision of library services for the VIPs, and the factors that hinder the provision of library services for VIPs.

Part F is to be answered by libraries with provision of library services for VIPs. This part seeks to find out the problems faced by these libraries in their provision of library services for VIPs, and also seeks to find out the factors which facilitated the provision of this service. Part G is to be answered by libraries which do not have provision of library services for VIPs. This part seeks to find out the factors which hinder the provision of this service.

Lastly, Part H includes questions about the library’s membership and background.
3.3 Population and sample

The population of this study consists of:

(i) the public libraries in Malaysia; and

(ii) the special libraries serving VIPs that are open to the visually impaired public.

In selecting a sample to represent the population of this study, none of the common sampling techniques were used. Instead, the sample chosen to represent the public libraries in Malaysia is the National Library of Malaysia and 15 other public libraries. These 15 other public libraries were listed in the ‘Senarai Alamat Perpustakaan Awam 2003 (List of Public Library Addresses 2003)’ from the National Library of Malaysia’s website (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 2004). This list consists of 15 libraries which are the 15 state public libraries. The list, however, was outdated as some of the contact details were no longer valid. Steps were taken to obtain as much current information as possible by calling the National Library of Malaysia, the Telekom phone directory (103), and calling the respective state libraries to confirm the addresses, contact details, and the current directors’ names.

These 15 state public libraries are as follows:

1. Johor State Public Library Corporation
2. Kedah State Public Library Corporation
3. Kelantan State Public Library Corporation
4. Kuala Lumpur Library
5. Labuan State Public Library Corporation
6. Melaka State Public Library Corporation
7. Negeri Sembilan State Public Library Corporation
8. Pahang State Public Library Corporation
9. Perak State Public Library Corporation
10. Perlis State Public Library Corporation
11. Penang State Public Library Corporation
12. Sabah State Library
13. Sarawak State Library
14. Selangor State Public Library Corporation
15. Terengganu State Public Library Corporation

Even though the Labuan Public Library Corporation is not an official state library as mentioned in Chapter 1, for the purposes of this study, it will be regarded as a state library. Thus the sample will consist of the National Library of Malaysia and the 15 state public libraries.

Selecting the National Library of Malaysia and the 15 state public libraries as the sample for the public library population is justifiable. The 15 state public libraries represent each state they belong to and most of the libraries in each state are under the control and guidance of their state public library.

As for the sample representing the special libraries serving the VIPs, the International Directory of Libraries for the Blind (Nomura and Yamada, 2000) was consulted. Only two libraries were listed in Malaysia, they are the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) Braille Resource Centre and the St. Nicholas Institute for the Visually Handicapped. Due to the small number of libraries, both libraries are included in the sample.
3.4 Pre-testing

The questionnaire was pre-tested to obtain valuable feedback. This was to ensure that any possible problems with regards to wordings, the format of the questionnaire, and the clarity of the questions and instructions will be brought to light and corrected.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on 2 of the 18 sample libraries. The two chosen were the National Library of Malaysia and the Sabah State Library. After the pre-test, some amendments were made before the final questionnaire was sent to all the sample libraries.

3.5 Data Collection

The finalised questionnaire was sent by Pos Laju National Courier to all 18 libraries on the 6th of January 2006. The questionnaires were sent by Pos Laju National Courier due to the small sample and thus to ensure that all the libraries received their questionnaires. Since the Pos Laju National Courier was used, the time frame given to complete the questionnaire was two weeks and the due date given to the libraries to return the answered questionnaire was the 19th of January 2006.

By the due date, only four answered questionnaires were received. Reminders in the form of telephone calls to the libraries were conducted. After numerous reminders, the balance of the 14 questionnaires were all finally returned by the 17th of February 2006. This gives a response rate of 100%.

Most of the libraries had completed the questionnaire satisfactorily. However, telephone interviews and e-mail correspondences had to be conducted on a few libraries to obtain answers for questions which were not answered or were not clearly answered.
Questions asked during the telephone interviews and e-mail correspondences were similar to that of the questions in the questionnaire. Some of the libraries were also asked to explain in greater detail their answers in order for the author to have a clearer picture.

3.6 Data Analysis

After the data was collected, as described in the previous section, the data was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) student edition version 11.0 for Windows. The data was then analysed.

The results and data analysis are presented in the next chapter.