CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the outline of the study, followed by the summary, discussions, and conclusions of the key findings. Recommendations would be given for improvements of library services for VIPs and also recommendations for further study.

5.1 Outline of the study

The estimated population of VIPs in Malaysia of 888,420 in the year 2005 was calculated based on the prevalence level given in the study by Resnikoff et al. (2004). It was felt that there was a need to find out about the current levels of provision of library services by both public libraries and special libraries for VIPs. Thus, the objectives of this study was to find out the current level of provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia, the problems faced by the libraries with reference to this provision, the factors which facilitated this provision, and the factors that influenced the non-provision of library services for VIPs.

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

The scope of this study was limited to Malaysia’s public libraries at the national and state level, and the special libraries for VIPs. This study used the postal survey method. The questionnaire consisted of 8 parts touching on all the 3 research questions. The questionnaire was put through pre-testing before being finalised. The finalised questionnaires in 2 different languages (English and Bahasa Melayu) were sent to the sample of 18 libraries. A 100% response rate was achieved. The data from the questionnaire responses was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) student edition version 11.0 for Windows.

The results and data analysis was presented in the previous chapter. This chapter continues from the previous chapter by giving a summary of the findings with discussions and conclusions. Some comparison would be made between the findings of this study and that of the UK studies by Craddock (1985) and LISU (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000). Whenever there is a comparison, it is imperative to keep in mind of the differences between the UK studies and this study, which are:

- the UK studies were conducted solely on public libraries and did not include special libraries;
- the sample for the questionnaire in the UK studies consisted of all public library authorities in the UK, whereas, this study only included certain categories of public libraries in Malaysia, namely the national and state categories; and
- the study by Craddock (1985) was more than 2 decades old and focused on the blind and not on VIPs.
5.2 Key findings - Summary, discussions, and conclusions

Background of libraries

The questionnaire responses showed that the 18 libraries were established between 1881 and 2000. Ten of these libraries were found to not have any provision of library services for VIPs at the time of replying the questionnaire. These libraries were PNM, Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, and Terengganu. It was noted that Terengganu was in the midst of preparing themselves to provide library services for VIPs.

As for the provision of library services for VIPs, 8 libraries were found to have provision for library services for VIPs. They were Labuan, Penang, Perlis, Sabah, Sarawak, Selangor, MAB, and St. Nicholas. MAB was the earliest to provide library services for VIPs in the year 1952, followed by St. Nicholas in the 1960s. Thus, the special libraries have been providing library services for VIPs for approximately half a century now. Whereas for the public libraries, the provision of library services for VIPs started much later on. The earliest public library to provide this service was Sabah which started provision about a decade ago and the most recent public library to provide this service was Perlis in 2004. Thus, the provision of library services for VIPs among public libraries was still relatively new compared to the provision by the special libraries. This must be kept in mind whenever there is any comparison made on the provision of this service between public libraries and special libraries.

All 18 libraries could provide the statistics of their total library membership. Only 3 libraries (16.67%) could provide the statistics of the total number of visually impaired members. Even more disappointing was that only 3 libraries (16.67%) could provide the
statistics of the total number of disabled members. The availability of this type of statistics is crucial to justify the existence or need of various special services, to request for additional budget allocation, and for planning and decision making.

As for the libraries’ main source of funds, the public libraries’ main source of funds was government funding. It was found that special libraries had to rely on donations from the public as their main source of funds. This makes it harder for special libraries as they have to rely on the generosity of the public for the continuance and improvement of their services.

**Library materials for VIPs**

The libraries were queried on the provision of 5 different types of library materials: large print books, Braille books, talking books, talking magazines, and talking newspapers.

It was found that the level of provision of accessible format library materials for VIPs was rather low. Overall, 38.9% of the 18 libraries provided large print books, 27.8% provided Braille books, 38.9% provided talking books, 5.6% provided talking magazines, and 5.6% provided talking newspapers.

The provision level among the 16 public libraries was even lower than the overall level of provision among all 18 libraries. For the level of provision among the public libraries, 37.5% of public libraries provided large print books, 18.75% Braille books, and 31.25% talking books. There were no provision for talking magazines and talking newspapers among public libraries. The study by Craddock (1985) found a lower level of provision of Braille books among public libraries with only 8.6% providing Braille books.
For large print books, a total quantity of 1,653 was being provided by 7 libraries in Malaysia. 96% of these were being provided by public libraries. These large print books can be used not only by the visually impaired users but also by sighted users. It was found that the large print books in a few of the public libraries were used by sighted users and not the visually impaired. Thus, the provision of large print books did not necessarily indicate that the libraries were targeting VIPs as their target group of users.

For Braille books, a total quantity of 3,383 was being provided. The 2 special libraries contributed about 80% of the total provision. The balance 20% was provided by the 3 public libraries. This showed that even though there were a higher number of public libraries providing Braille books compared to the number of special libraries, the majority quantity of Braille books provided by libraries in Malaysia were still being provided by special libraries.

In terms of the number of talking books in audio cassette format, the results showed that about 70% were provided by special libraries. The balance of 30% was provided by 4 public libraries. As for the number of talking books in CD format provided by the libraries, the results were different from the audio cassette format. For the CD format, 87.16% of the total number provided by libraries in Malaysia was provided by the 3 public libraries. Only 12.84% was provided by a special library.

The provision of a higher number of audio cassette talking books by special libraries compared to public libraries, and the provision of a higher number of CD talking books by public libraries compared to special libraries could be due to the fact that library services for VIPs by public libraries started within the last decade. And instead of providing talking
books in audio cassette format, public libraries went directly to the provision of talking books in CD format which is of a newer technology.

*Production of library materials for VIPs*

It was found that 3 (18.75%) of the 16 public libraries produced library materials for VIPs. Craddock’s (1985) study had found a lower level of 7.89% (12 out of the 152 public libraries surveyed in the UK) producing library materials for VIPs.

Overall, this study found 27.8% or 5 of the total 18 libraries had produced library materials for VIPs. From the 5 libraries, all (100%) produced Braille books, 4 (80%) produced talking books, 1 (20%) produced talking magazines, 1 (20%) produced talking newspapers, and 2 (40%) produced other materials (i.e. tactile graphic books, and large print materials). Generally, the libraries produced their own materials to better provide for the various needs and demands of VIPs.

Volunteers were relied on to assist in the production process in 4 (80%) of these libraries. The volunteers’ functions in the 4 libraries were mainly reading for the production of talking books and typing for Braille production. Two of the 4 libraries, which relied on volunteers, later stated in their response to a question in Part F of the questionnaire, that the high reliance on volunteers was a problem faced by their library. These 2 libraries were special libraries. The high reliance of volunteers by special libraries could be due to the reason that special libraries may not have sufficient staff or may not have sufficient funds to hire adequate number of staff.
Library equipments for VIPs

Information on the provision of assistive equipments to be used within library premises by VIPs was obtained by the questionnaire. Six (33.3%) of the 18 libraries provided audio cassette players, and 4 (22.2%) provided CD players.

As for magnifying devices, this study found none of the libraries provided magnifiers. This finding differed greatly from Craddock’s (1985) as Craddock (1985) found 17.8% of public libraries in the UK provided magnifiers. This study found none of the libraries provided magnifying lamps, 3 libraries (16.7%) provided screen magnifiers, and 1 library (5.6%) provided CCTVs. For Computer Assistive Technology, 4 libraries (22.2%) provided computers with internet access, 5 libraries (27.8%) provided scanners, 4 libraries (22.2%) provided screen readers, 4 libraries (22.2%) provided Braille translation software, 4 libraries (22.2%) provided Braille printers, 1 library (5.6%) provided refreshable Braille display, and none provided Kurzweil or Optacon reading devices. Four (22.2%) of the 18 libraries also provided other equipments (i.e. Braille typewriters, scientific calculator, and BrailleNotes).

Just like the provision of accessible format library materials for VIPs, the number of libraries with provision of library equipments for VIPs was also low. The information given in the previous paragraph showed that for any 1 type of library equipment, the highest level of provision was 33.3%. In other words, none of the library equipments were being provided by more than one third of the libraries.

The total number of library equipments provided for VIPs to be used within library premises in public and special libraries in Malaysia were 30 audio cassette players, 12 CD
players, 3 screen magnifiers, 1 CCTV, 12 computers with internet access, 8 scanners, 8 screen readers, 8 Braille translation software, 5 Braille printers, 1 refreshable Braille display, 6 Braille typewriters, 1 scientific calculator, and 3 BrailleNotes. This total number is insufficient to meet the needs of the visually impaired population.

Information on the provision of library equipments provided for loan to VIPs was also obtained. One library (5.6%) provided audio cassette players for loan to VIPs. The number of audio cassette players provided for loan was 50. It was good effort shown by the library in providing this service and making this equipment available to 50 users at one time. None of the libraries provided CD players for loan to VIPs. Besides the players, 1 library (5.6%) also provided a Braille typewriter for loan to VIPs.

*Services for VIPs*

In terms of the current provision of library services for VIPs, 5 (27.8%) of the 18 libraries had their staff provided with training with reference to the provision of library services for VIPs. It was inferred that the staff were provided with training which were mainly on the production of materials and the use of assistive equipment.

Six (33.3%) of the libraries surveyed provided cataloguing of accessible format library materials for VIPs. The results had shown that the majority of the libraries with provision of library materials for VIPs in this country had not neglected cataloguing these materials.

14 of the public libraries surveyed were found to provide interlibrary loan services. However, from these 14 libraries, only 4 libraries or 28.6% actually provided interlibrary loan services for materials suitable for VIPs. Interlibrary loan services for materials suitable
for VIPs can be provided by any library even if they did not provide any accessible format materials in their library. This can be done as long as libraries with and libraries without accessible format library materials for VIPs are willing to co-operate with each other.

In the UK, the Disability Discrimination Act can impel public libraries to provide interlibrary loan services for alternative format materials as it was “unlawful for libraries to refuse a request for alternative format materials, and the inter-lending system must therefore be able to process this requirement.” (National Library for the Blind, 2001, In, Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001). There is currently no legislation in Malaysia which is known to the author to have similar capacity as the above act in the UK.

What was rather surprising, from the results of the study, was that none of the special libraries provided interlibrary loan services. If they are able to provide this service to their users, they would be providing an opportunity for their users to gain access to so much more than what their library could provide on its own. The special libraries could also provide this service to other libraries by being a source for other libraries to obtain accessible format library materials for VIPs. This would encourage more libraries, especially public libraries, to provide services for VIPs.

As for mobile library services, 13 public libraries provided this service. From these 13 libraries, only 1 library provided accessible format library materials in their mobile libraries. Libraries with both mobile library services and library materials for VIPs should be encouraged to provide these materials in their mobile libraries as all the necessary materials and services are already available. What is left is only the organisation of the materials and services.
Mobile libraries can actually be used by the libraries as a promotional tool to promote library services for VIPs who live in the suburbs or outskirts of the country. In Chairat’s (1999) paper it was suggested that in order to improve the situation in libraries which provided services for VIPs but did not provide any mobile library services as in the case of the Caulfield Memorial Library in Thailand, cooperation should arise between these libraries and other libraries with existing mobile library services.

As for postal services for VIPs, only 3 libraries (16.7%) provided this service, even though postage is free. From these 3 libraries, only 1 is a public library. Craddock (1985) also found dismal results as only 11% or 17 public libraries provided postal services for the blind. Postage is also free in the UK.

This study found that not all the libraries which have provision of accessible format library materials for VIPs were delivering these materials to VIPs through postal services. Postal service is beneficial to many VIPs who do not live within travelling distance to a library which provides accessible format library materials. Even if some of the VIPs did live within travelling distance, receiving these materials through post is a convenient and ideal alternative.

Management of library

Three (16.7%) of the 18 libraries had a specific budget allocation for library services for VIPs. Similarly, the LISU study also found that most libraries did not have a specific budget allocation for library services for VIPs (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000).
This study found that the average number of types of materials, equipments, and services provided by libraries was higher for libraries with specific budget allocation as compared to libraries without specific budget allocation. Thus, having a specific budget allocation would probably help libraries in planning and managing their libraries better.

None of the libraries had an explicit policy on the provision of library services for VIPs. In the UK, 5% of the public libraries had an explicit policy (Evans, 2000). Only 1 library (5.6%) in this study had some form of policy which had also covered or included services for VIPs in part of the policy. The results were rather disappointing given the importance of having guidelines/policies for library services for VIPs. The study conducted by LISU (Evans, 2000), as mentioned in the Literature Review, showed a relationship between the existence of a policy statement and the provision of a wider range of special services. However, in this study the author was unable to make a comparison as none of the libraries had an explicit policy statement, and only 1 library had a policy in other areas which had included services for VIPs.

Seven libraries (38.9%) had on-going co-operation with other organisations working with VIPs. From these 7 libraries, 6 had provision for library services for VIPs. Since there were 8 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs, this meant that the other 2 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs did not have any kind of on-going co-operation with other organisations working with VIPs.

Six libraries (33.3%) had made efforts to provide easy access to their building facilities. From these 6 libraries, 4 were libraries with provision of library services for VIPs. This meant that another 4 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs had not made
efforts to provide easy access to its building facilities. Easy access to building facilities is an important factor that could affect the library’s patronage level among VIPs. Libraries which currently do not have provision of library services for VIPs should also make efforts to provide easy access for VIPs and other disabled. If there are plans to construct a new building or if it is already under construction (as in the case of Johor), steps should be taken to incorporate the needs of the disabled into the design of the building.

As for the provision of library concessions for VIPs, 7 libraries (38.9%) had provided some form of concessions for VIPs. Library concessions are important to encourage VIPs to make use of library services. Library concessions are especially important if the concessions are provided for recurring charges such as for the use of internet facilities. It was found that the most frequently mentioned barrier for VIPs in accessing the internet was cost (Williamson, Schauder and Bow, 2000). Thus, libraries should not only provide the equipments but also make it affordable for VIPs to use the facilities.

Only 1 or 5.6% of the libraries had conducted some form of study on the provision of library services for VIPs. More studies should be conducted to ensure that proper planning and decisions are made before implementation.

Problems faced by libraries in provision of library services for VIPs

Overall, 8 (44.4%) of the 18 libraries had made provision of library services for VIPs and were targeting VIPs as a target group of users. These libraries stated the problems they faced in their provision of library services for VIPs and they also gave their opinion on how their problems could be reduced or solved.
The problem faced by most (87.5%) of the 8 libraries was the problem of getting in touch with potential visually impaired users. This was followed by the ‘lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services’ (62.5%). Some of the libraries which had stated that these were problems faced by their libraries gave their opinion that these problems could be reduced or solved by co-operating with the Department of Social Welfare and other organisations for the blind at state level in obtaining information of the visually impaired population. Some were in the opinion that improvements in the public transportation to the libraries would help.

Another problem faced by 62.5% of the 8 libraries was ‘the lack of financial funds’. The libraries were in the opinion that to solve this problem, funds should be increased or channelled for this service. None of the libraries elaborated on how the funds could be increased or how they would get the funds channelled for this service.

The high level of reliance on volunteers was felt to be a problem by 25% or 2 of the libraries. One of these libraries also added that it was difficult to recruit competent staff to produce alternative format materials. The opinions given to reduce or solve these problems was to provide staff with salaries that commensurate with their competence, to recruit and train volunteers on a on-going basis, and to pay competent persons at piece rate for producing materials.

Only 1 library (12.5%) found the lack of support from authoritative bodies to be a problem. The authoritative bodies in mind were the book publishers and book authors. This library also added another problem to its list by stating that the Braille production process is labour-intensive and time consuming. The opinion given by the library to solve their
problem was that the publishers and authors could provide the libraries serving VIPs with soft copies of their books in order for the libraries to translate into Braille or into DAISY format.

Factors which facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs

These 8 libraries were also asked about the factors which had facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs. The factor which had facilitated the majority (87.5%) of the 8 libraries in providing this service was the ‘initiative from the library’s Director’. 62.5% felt that request made by NGOs was a facilitating factor. Only 12.5% of the libraries stated that directives from the government had facilitated the provision of library services for VIPs. These facilitating factors could be very important indicators of the role that certain parties can play in ensuring that there was provision for certain minority groups like the VIPs.

Factors which hinder the provision of library services for VIPs

As for the libraries which did not provide library services for VIPs, the main factor which hindered the provision was the ‘lack of financial funds’ (66.7%). The second most frequently selected factor was the ‘lack of interest shown by VIPs’ (44.4%). This was followed by 33.3% with the assumption that the number of VIPs was too small. Also 33.3% felt that there was a lack of co-operation between libraries specialising in services to VIPs and public libraries and this may have hindered their provision. 11.1% or 1 library felt that there was lack of support from library committee members. None of the libraries had the attitude that the provision of library services for VIPs was not necessary. None of them also felt that the provision of library services for VIPs provided by other libraries was already sufficient.
The factors provided by the libraries had brought to light the possible causes of the low level of provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia. Steps could be taken in order to eliminate or reduce these factors in order to increase the level of provision of library services for VIPs.

Conclusion

From the key findings of this study, all 3 research questions were answered. In the past decade, developments can be seen in the number of public libraries which were providing library services for VIPs. The number of public libraries with provision has been growing from no public libraries with provision prior to 1996 to 6 public libraries currently with provision. Soon the number will increase to 7 public libraries once Terengganu commences their provision. However, even though there were more public libraries now providing library services for VIPs, many improvements can be made to increase the level of provision in terms of the management of the libraries, and the number of materials, equipment, and services provided by both the special libraries and public libraries.

5.3 Recommendations

Recommendations for improvements of library services for VIPs and recommendations for further studies would be provided in this section.

5.3.1 Recommendations for improvements in library services for VIPs

The recommendations for improvements in library services for VIPs are provided based on the findings of the study. The first 3 recommendations pertain to the roles that can be played by various parties in order to bring about better library services for VIPs in Malaysia. The fourth recommendation recommends that a partnership be formed between
the 18 libraries studied. The fifth recommendation lists various measures for the improvement of individual libraries.

**5.3.1.1 The role of the government**

Only 1 (12.5%) out of the 8 libraries with provision of library services for VIPs felt that directives from the government had been a facilitating factor in their provision of library services for VIPs. The author feels that the government can play a much more important role in encouraging the provision of library services for VIPs among the public libraries. According to Craddock (1997), “Scandinavian [library] models demonstrate that co-ordination is most effective where central government has spearheaded development by the provision of funding, legislation and directional policies and the creation or support of national institutions.”

There are 2 main ways in which the government may play a bigger role. They are in the provision of funding and legislation. The findings indicate that 62.5% of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs faced problems of lack of funds. Also, 66.7% of the libraries without provision of library services for VIPs felt that the lack of funds was a factor that hindered the provision of library services for VIPs. The federal and state government is currently providing funds for public libraries. The government can thus ensure that a certain percentage of their funds are allocated for library services for VIPs, or they can provide additional funds specifically for the provision of this service. Thus, the government is able to strongly influence the public libraries to make provision of library services for VIPs.
Legislation such as the proposed Persons with Disabilities Act 2002 drafted by the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development (Penang Down Syndrome Association, 2005a) can play an important role towards the equalisation of opportunities including the equalisation of access to information. Section 5 of Part 5 of this draft act states that “relevant authorities shall develop programmes to make information services and documentation accessible for different groups of persons with disability. Braille, tape services, large print and other appropriate technologies should be used to provide access to written information and documentation for persons with visual impairments …” (Penang Down Syndrome Association, 2005b).

5.3.1.2 The role of library directors and management

The results of this study show that 87.5% of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs felt that the initiative taken by their library’s Director was a factor which facilitated their provision of this service. This clearly indicates the important role that library Directors play in leading the library. Directors of libraries which currently do not provide library services for VIPs should take their cue from the Directors of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs and make efforts to lead their library towards the provision of library services for VIPs.

Directors of libraries with services for VIPs could also help influence their peers into providing this service. Special libraries and NGOs such as the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) can hold special dialogue or meetings with library Directors to discuss the possibility of more public libraries providing services for VIPs.
5.3.1.3 The role of NGOs

A total of 87.5% of libraries with provision of library services for VIPs faced problems in getting in touch with potential visually impaired users. 62.5% found that the lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services was a problem faced by their libraries. NGOs can play an important role in helping to reduce these problems. NGOs such as the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) and other associations, societies and organisations working with VIPs can raise awareness among VIPs by providing the VIPs with relevant information about that availability of library services. These NGOs can also provide libraries with information on VIPs such as the number of VIPs in a certain area covered by the libraries, the contact details of VIPs, and so on.

As for libraries without provision of library services for VIPs, the findings of this study showed that 44.4% of these libraries felt that the lack of interest shown by VIPs was a factor that hindered the provision of library services for VIPs. One of these libraries also added that not only were there no demand from VIPs, there were also no demand from associations, societies, or agencies representing VIPs. Also 33.3% of the libraries without provision of library services for VIPs felt that the number of VIPs was too small. NGOs can play an important role by being the collective voice of VIPs and to demand on behalf of VIPs for equitable library services. This can be done through awareness campaigns, petitions, and so on. NGOs can also obtain the support from large corporate bodies towards the achievement of this goal.

5.3.1.4 Partnership between public libraries and special libraries for VIPs

Both public libraries and special libraries for VIPs have their own strengths which can contribute towards the improvement of library services for VIPs in Malaysia. Public
libraries provide local access and a comprehensive network of libraries (which includes mobile libraries) which are able to reach out to the public all around the country. Special libraries have the expertise and currently they also provide the bulk of materials, equipments, and services for VIPs in Malaysia. Public libraries and special libraries can work together by utilising each others’ strengths towards a common objective of improving library services for VIPs. Public libraries and special libraries can form a co-operative partnership towards achieving this objective. A committee can be formed to steer this partnership. The committee members should consist of the national library, the state public libraries, and the special libraries.

There are various areas in which this partnership can work on. One of the areas of co-operation which this study found to be lacking is interlibrary loan services. The findings of this study show that 80% of Braille books and 70% of talking books in Malaysia are provided by special libraries. Whereas, 96% of large print titles are provided by public libraries. This indicates a lack of balance in the provision of the various types of accessible format materials between public libraries and special libraries.

Through interlibrary loan services, VIPs can go to the nearest library (be it a public library or a special library) and request for various accessible format library materials. However, in order for interlibrary loan services of accessible format library materials to be successfully implemented, there has to be a national union catalogue of all accessible format library materials available in all public and special libraries in the country. This is another area of co-operation which can be worked out through this partnership.
Another area of co-operation is the training of staff. Special libraries have the expertise and experience in serving VIPs. Thus, special libraries can play an important role in providing training for public library staff.

87.5% of the libraries with provision of library services for VIPs mentioned that they had problems in getting in touch with potential visually impaired users. And 62.5% mentioned that the lack of awareness among VIPs on the availability of library services was a problem faced by them. This clearly shows that marketing and promotions can play an important role in the provision of library services for VIPs. Through a partnership, each library need not promote and market their services individually but all the libraries can do so as one with sustained nationwide promotional campaigns.

Due to the lack of commercially produced accessible format materials (especially in Bahasa Melayu), libraries have resorted in producing their own materials. With these individual libraries producing their own materials, duplication in bound to occur if there were no partnership or communication between these libraries. Also 2 of the libraries in the study mentioned that they faced problems related to the production of accessible formation materials due to it being time consuming and due to the difficulty in recruiting competent staff. One library was in the opinion that this problem can be reduced or solved if publishers were to provide soft copies of the books for translation into Braille or into DAISY format. The author does not know of any indication of whether or not the publishers would agree to this request, however, it is felt that if the request is made by a collective voice representing libraries serving VIPs in Malaysia, then the chances of an agreement could possibly be higher.
Through a partnership of libraries, research relevant to library services for VIPs can also be conducted more efficiently and at a larger scale compared to research that would be conducted by individual libraries.

Thus it can be seen that there can be many possible benefits of a partnership among libraries towards a common goal of equalisation of library services for VIPs. Examples of countries which have benefited from the forming of partnerships between public libraries and special libraries for VIPs are the UK through the Share the Vision (STV) partnership agency (Craddock, 1997), and Canada through the VISUNET: CANADA Partners Program (Griebel, 2000). Malaysia too can hope to benefit from this type of partnership as 33.3% of the libraries without provision of library services for VIPs feel that the lack of co-operation between special libraries and public libraries was a factor that hindered their provision of this service.

5.3.1.5 Recommendations for individual libraries

Besides working with other libraries on a national level, individual libraries can also work at improving their own libraries with reference to library services for VIPs. The libraries should work on the following aspects of their services for VIPs:

(i) Providing an explicit policy statement for the provision of library services for VIPs;

(ii) Providing a specific budget allocation for the provision of library services for VIPs;

(iii) Compiling statistics of library members who are visually impaired and also statistics of usage of accessible format materials and assistive equipments;
(iv) Providing easy access to their building facilities including easy access within the library building, within the library compound, and easy access of transportation to the library;

(v) Providing concessions for all chargeable services such as the use of internet services;

(vi) Continuous co-operation with all libraries (public or special) serving VIPs, and government and non-government organisations working with VIPs; and

(vii) Providing interlibrary loan services, postal services and mobile library services for accessible format library materials for VIPs.

5.3.2 Recommendations for further studies

Since the provision of library services for VIPs in Malaysia is an area which has generally not been given much research coverage, there are actually many studies in this area that can be conducted. However, the recommendations for further research provided here are recommendations that are felt to be most relevant at this stage. The recommendations are as follows:

(i) Library services for VIPs from the users’ perspective

Research on the needs and the level of satisfaction of VIPs pertaining to library services should be conducted. This study is only from the service providers’ perspective. Having both research on the service providers’ perspective and also the users’ perspective allow for service providers to gauge their services and know their users in greater detail.

In 2001, the Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU) of Loughborough University conducted a large scale research on the users’ perspective of library and information services for VIPs in the UK (Davies, Wisdom, and Creaser, 2001).
(ii) Marketing and promotion of library services for VIPs

A study should be conducted on the marketing and promotion of library services for VIPs. The study should seek to find out, among other things:

- the current marketing and promotional activities conducted by libraries
- the effectiveness of marketing and promotional activities conducted
- how current users came to know about the library services for VIPs
- the level of awareness and the perception among users and non-users about the various library services for VIPs available

(iii) Case study on libraries with provision of library services for VIPs

A case study should be conducted on libraries with provision of library services for VIPs. This would provide more in-depth and qualitative information about these libraries.

The findings from this case study on may improve the understanding and provide greater detail on the background and the characteristics of these libraries. It should also study how the libraries persevered in the provision of library services for VIPs amidst all the problems faced. The information from this case study can be valuable for other libraries which are planning to provide library services for VIPs.

(iv) Follow up study on the current status of provision of library services for VIPs

A follow up of this study should be conducted after 5 years to compare the results of these studies. If time and money were not constraints, then the study could include all the public libraries instead of just selected libraries as in the case of this study.
5.4 Conclusion

This study has been a journey of discovery on a topic that has not been given much research attention in this country. It is hoped that the findings and the recommendations of the study will bring about much positive effects to the development of library services for VIPs in Malaysia.