

## **Benchmarking Framework For Reading And Knowledge Growth: A Malaysian Case**

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### **Abstract:**

Benchmarking though a daily activity that remains unnoticeable by many of us and researchers seem unaware of this quality approach. This paper highlights significance of benchmarking in knowledge growth discipline. The authors try to emphasise knowledge growth because it seems neglected due to variety of reasons. In this regard, benchmarking research method started with fieldwork (visits to the benchmarked libraries), informal interviews and literature review. This helped in formulation of workable Best Practices framework. A constant comparative analysis process (benchmarking) was carried out focusing mainly on data collection, coding and analysis. Consequently, this iterative process led to the development of a framework to find the extent of knowledge growth against workable Best Practices. This framework is prelude to a comprehensive one in future for the use of variety of stakeholders including heads of library institutions, librarians, NGOs involved in knowledge growth, teachers and library users.

**Keywords:** Benchmarking, best practices, knowledge growth, literacy, library

## **Introduction**

This study discusses the nature and extent of library users' knowledge growth based upon library provision in Sarawak, Malaysia. It covers seven districts with twenty-one libraries (one urban and two village libraries in each district). The Research and Development Division of Sarawak State Library (Pustaka Negeri Sarawak) (PNS) embarked on this research to enhance knowledge growth and reading habits among the library users in Sarawak. This project explored reading habits using a standard comprehensive approach for all the districts. The proposed research covers investigation of 'present state' of library users' reading habits in Kuching, Sri Aman, Sarikei, Sibul, Bintulu, Miri and Limbang. This study shows that the Research and Development Division of Pustaka Negeri Sarawak (PNS) demands significantly on increasing the number of library users and has established substantial effort in the promotion of knowledge growth and reading habits in the whole state of Sarawak. The research study takes benchmarked libraries as a baseline structure to work on.

## **PNS' Contributions**

The government has made a significant move to promote literacy and encourage life-long learning. For instance, a total number of memberships for all these libraries in 2012 was 10.01 million (35.8%) out of a total population of 28.5 million (NLM, 2013). Based on the report, the increased number of libraries and their membership in Malaysia are in line with the aim of Vision 2020: to achieve the status of a developed nation in 2020. The 'positive' trends reflect attempts by the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individuals in promoting Bangsa Membaca, Bangsa Berjaya (A Reading Society: A Successful Society).

Subsequently, the Research and Development Division of Pustaka Negeri Sarawak (PNS) has established substantial efforts in the promotion of knowledge growth and reading habits in the whole state of Sarawak. To meet the above challenge, the Research and Development Division has formulated the following mission:

- To facilitate research and related activities on library science.
- To identify queries regarding library services to answer through research and promote the conduct of research to answer those queries.
- To review and make recommendations on studies/research and professional efforts pertaining to libraries and recommending inclusions, standards, procedures and policies as appropriate to Pustaka Negeri Sarawak ([www.pustaka-sarawak.com](http://www.pustaka-sarawak.com)).

The Research and Development Division also set up the following objectives:

- Undertake research and study on library and information science that is designed for the improvement and continuing development in the quality of library's roles in the society and library professionals.