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Using Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) Standards as a “Wake-Up Call” to Information Resource Assessment: An early view

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Abstract

The purpose of collection assessment is to determine the strengths and weaknesses of library collection. This article is to uncover the extent of academic library collection in supporting the needs of academic programmes. This study chose Malaysian Qualifications Agency's Standards as an assessment guideline. The research approach is a mixed-method and exploratory approach. The main finding revealed that the information resources seemed to be imbalanced in its capacity and was less incorporating with the MQA guidelines for collection timeliness. The finding is valuable to the library administrators as a “wake-up call” to further improve their collection development process.

Keywords: Collection assessment; Malaysian Qualifications Agency's (MQA) Standards; Library collection; Academic library.

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1.0 Introduction

Collection assessment is one of the ways to provide evidence of current conditions for library collection. The assessment is useful for the library administrators to revisit the alignment of the library's mission with its parent institution. The results of this managerial exercise would form the basis of decision making for future action.

This paper is an attempt to unearth the existing condition of library collection in an academic library. Academic library is a repository and a “place of managing information” resources (Sharma, Rana, & Nunkoo, 2021). Therefore, from time to time, the library administrators have to assess the existing conditions of their collection to ensure responsive collection development.

According to University Library Standards (ACRL, 2018), the goals of the library can be outlined as “to support teaching and learning, research and innovation, lifelong learning and cultivating a knowledge culture”.

Sanjay (2016) has reiterated the collection development activities in academic libraries as a broad range of processes and procedures including the selection, acquisition and evaluation of library collection. He even highlights the requirement to plan, select, and acquire multiple formats of library materials with the cooperation and involvement of academicians. Librarians and faculty members have to work together, hand-in-hand to ensure the library collection is responsive to the teaching, learning, and research needs of the university community.

The academic library collection development should take into consideration the use of established reference documents such as MQA's standards and academic programmes' updated course lesson plans or recommended syllabus reading requirements for a given semester to plan, select, and acquire library materials that support the academic programmes offered. As the saying goes, it always takes two to tango. Thus, both the librarians and the faculty members have to develop trust and seamlessly collaborate to achieve a strong, responsive library collection that supports the information needs of university community members.

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1.1 Problem Statement

The academic library builds the majority of its collection based on faculty demand. At the beginning of fiscal year, the librarians will make a call for new suggested titles from the faculty members. Based on on-site experience, a few faculty members are the regulars to update their new recommended titles to the library. Majority of them will be contacted individually by the library liaison, and/ or reminded frequently, especially the due dates provided just around the corner. For many years, the librarians could only rely on a few listings which made their ways to the library's entrance.

However, due to the low turnover, the academic library has taken an initiative to increase their syllabus titles recommendations, along with faculty's recommendations. Since the beginning of the fiscal year 2012, librarians are given the responsibility to recommend library materials that support the academic requirement of course information. The academic library administrators have set a performance indicator in developing syllabus-based information resources which target one hundred percent (100%) of syllabus-based titles made available to the library collection. The academic librarians have to be more proactive to gather more listings of current course information through the faculty's curriculum review meetings and via academic information systems such as Academic Information Management System (AIMS). The course information displayed in the academic information system is relied on by the faculty member to update the recommended readings.

For the past ten years, there have been prolonged issues, yet to be solved. First is the availability of the titles in the marketplace. Some titles could be acquired, and some were not able to acquire and to even get the substitute for the specific titles. The book supplier feedback about un-acquired titles is frequently about the title status like "Out of print" or "Out of stock" that affected the availability of syllabus titles into library collections. Second is the up-datedness of the recommended readings in the course information. The librarians in-charge frequently receive not up-dated syllabus. This is another hindrance in the development of a strong syllabus-based library materials. These two factors did influence the non-achievement of a hundred percent (100%) syllabus-based titles' availability in the academic library shelves. The current achievement of the year 2021 is seventy nine percent (79%) of syllabus titles made available in the library collection.

The increment of syllabus-based library materials seems promising to achieve better collection. However, the university is not left alone without being audited by the accreditation agency. One aspect that involves auditing is library collection. The problem was, the researchers did not know the extent to which the syllabus-based library materials did meet the Malaysian Qualification Agency's standards or partially meet the requirement. By understanding the current conditions of library collection, the findings serve as a "wake-up-call" to further improve the collection development process so that the information resources will be relevant and useful to the library patrons.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are identified as below:

- 1.2.1 To identify the currency of syllabus-based library collection, as outlined by the MQA standards;
- 1.2.2 To determine the strengths and weaknesses of syllabus-based library collection, as outlined by the MQA standards;
- 1.2.3 To assist library management in developing syllabus-based library collections, as outlined by the MQA standards.

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Collection Assessment/ Evaluation/ Analysis

The terms of collection assessment, collection evaluation and collection analysis are being used interchangeably, as it shares the same objectives on how well the collection supports the user and institution needs.

Henry, et.al. (2008) described the purpose of collection assessment as to determine collection weaknesses, how budgets can be optimized and assess whether library utility can be maximized. It is impossible to build a balanced, useful and relevant academic library collection unless the strengths and weaknesses of the current collection are known. Ciszek and Young (2010) reckoned that the outcomes of collection assessment will contribute to a better understanding about library collection and will be beneficial while recommending new titles to be purchased.

Particularly, collection assessment will be beneficial in supporting the academic programmes auditing process by the MQA as a well-recognised accredited agency in Malaysia. Library could play their main role by ensuring the textbook or references for specific programmes has been fulfilled, or else, necessary urgent action could be taken, for example, the faculty quick purchasing request.

Recent studies of collection assessment conducted by Lim and Casselden (2021). It is a case study of collection analysis of Singapore Management University (SMU) Libraries publication references by using citation analysis approach. They found that the most cited references were the recent references publication from the years of 2014 (8.6 percent).

2.2 MQA Standards: An Overview

Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) monitors higher educational quality assurance practices and accreditation at national level. The quality assurance practices by MQA supported by five (5) guidelines; Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF); Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA); Code of Practice for Institutional Audit (COPIA); Programme Discipline Standards; and Guides to Good Practices.

According to the current version, COPPA 2018, Area 5 Educational Resources described that the standards for library or resource centers must have adequate and up-to-date reference materials and qualified staff that meet the needs of the programme. In preparing the programmes to be audited by MQA auditor, COPIA 2009, Area 6 Educational Resources describes that "the library and resource

center must have adequate and current references". The statement is found in both documents of COPIA and COPPA.

Therefore, the statement outlines a strong argument in implementing library collection assessment as academic libraries are an utmost provider of educational resources for higher learning institutions.

2.3 Persidangan Perpustakaan Universiti dan Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (PERPUN): It's Background

Since 1976, PERPUN has been a popular forum of cooperation among the heads of the academic library and National Library of Malaysia. Among the initiatives developed by PERPUN include the first publication of Malaysia University Library Standard in 2016. The 2018 PERPUN Standard outlines the "library requirement in providing textbooks and additional textbooks according to the programmes and courses offered by university". The least requirement is the "library should provide a minimum one title of textbook and one title of additional textbook or ratio 1:1" (textbook to additional textbook). In addition, the university management should allocate 2% of university expenditure for the purpose of library collection development.

2.4 Academic Library Policy

A policy is a standard of services that shows organizational values and equitable services towards patrons. In the context of this study, the academic library policy is Syllabus Management Policy. Throughout the implementation of the policy, the academic library has outlined the development of syllabus-based collections based on COPPA and MQA letters number 3/2015. COPPA has clearly defined that the academic library must have adequate and up-to-date reference materials. While MQA letters number 3/2015, page 2 number six (in roman style) describes the academic library facilities from the aspects of capacity including reference books must be adequate and up-to-date.

Based on these two main resources, the academic library must ensure their collection supports resources of teaching and learning in higher education, adequate, and up to date. The phrase 'up-to-date' manifests the content of academic library resources. At this point, the academic library has outlined that the recommendation process of syllabus titles only includes the current year of publication (five years publications), counted from the year of recommendation. It is to ensure the up-datedness of syllabus-based collection development.

3.0 Methodology Of Research

This study adopted an exploratory, mixed-method research approach. The mixed-method research approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis in a single study (Creswell, 1999). This research study provides an opportunity by understanding the complex event qualitatively and to explain the event by numbers, charts or basic statistical analyses quantitatively.

The use of mixed-methods allows the librarians to exercise their professional expert judgment in a systematic and universally recognized manner, as well as being able to be objective in supporting with quantitative evidence.

This study is also considered as exploratory research. The purpose is to describe the occurred ambiguity phenomena surrounding the issues. In this context of study, exploratory research is conducted purposely to gain better understanding about the current-ness of syllabus-based collection as compared to the MQA currency standards or requirements.

The target population of this study is syllabus-based collection both in printed and electronic formats. The document that contained bibliographic detail of syllabus-based collection has been generated through a library management system (LMS). The main indicator of syllabus-based collection has been recognized through tag number 526 which refers to Study Programme Information Note included in the bibliographic details.

The sampling technique of this study was the purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling by purpose of the study. The sample was categorized into five years terms of publication, for example from the year 2021 into 2017 of five years terms of publication ages. Then, the sample was ranked by the ages of publication. Each age of publication ranked based on percentages of syllabus copies in university libraries. The highest ranked was the highest percentages of syllabus copies by the age of publication, whereas the lowest ranked was the lowest percentages of syllabus copies by the age of publication. As this study focused on the syllabus-based collection timeliness, the samples selected were placed in the top five ranking of highest percentages of syllabus copies by the age of publication. It is believed that through purposive sampling, the desired data could be obtained. The obtained data will be analyzed into two parts that are cumulative data analysis and cluster analysis.

In addition, the study conducted the interview sessions between the researcher and the Head of Programme Accreditations for Science and Technology Cluster (also known as HOPA S&T). Fifteen (15) questions were used during the interviewing session with HOPA S&T. The S&T cluster was selected (compared to Social Science and Humanities cluster, Business and Management cluster and Academic Centre cluster) because the S&T has the highest number of faculties.

4.0 Report Of Findings

The following report of findings begins with informing the data analysis of printed materials, and ends with the report of electronic resources findings, and thus, indicates the currency of syllabus-based library collection based on the MQA standards. The data were analyzed in cumulative and in accordance with the cluster for both printed and e-book resources.

4.1 Printed Resources Collection Analysis

4.1.1 Cumulative Analysis

Table 4.1.1 Cumulative Analysis of Syllabus Book Collection

RANK	YEAR OF PUBLICATION	FREQUENCY (%)
1	6-10	19.75
2	16-20	15.25
3	11-15	14.46
4	21-25	7.57
5	1-5	7.25

Table 4.1.1 above displays a cumulative analysis of 38,865 syllabus book titles. The collection was ranked according to their cumulative data in percentage. From the analysis, the researcher found that only 7.25 percent of syllabus-based collections were currently between one to five years of publication and placed at the fifth rank. The remaining syllabus collection was found to be more than six to twenty five years of publication age and placed from the top rank to the fourth rank. The data indicated that the library patrons cited the retrospective collection rather than the current publication.

4.1.2 Cluster Analysis

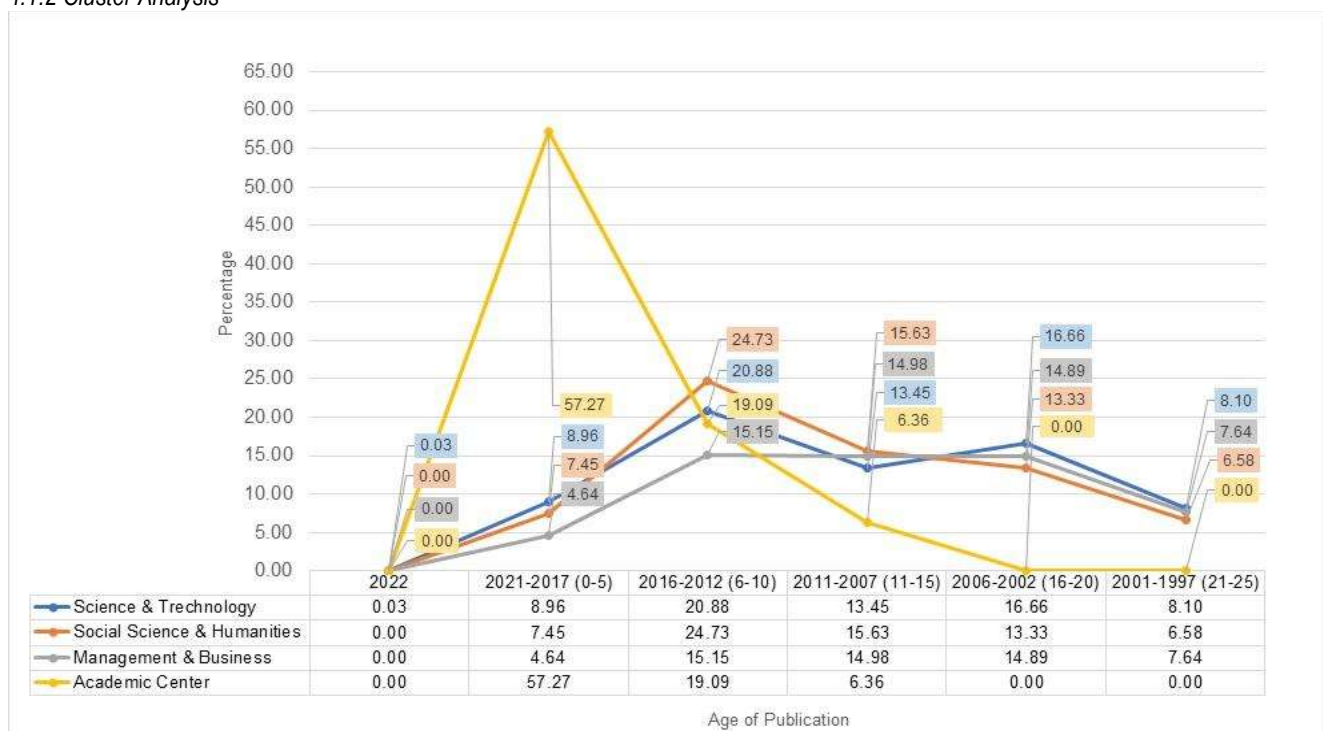


Figure 4.1.2 Cluster Analysis of Syllabus Book Collection

Figure 4.1.2 above illustrates the cluster analysis consisting of Science & Technology, Social Science & Humanities, Business & Management and Academic Center clusters. The researcher found that only programmes under the Academic Center cluster had the highest percentage with 57.27 percent of the syllabus-based collection within five years of publication age. None of the other clusters achieved more than nine percent of their syllabus-based collection within five years of publication (Science and Technology cluster - 8.96 percent, Social Science and Humanities cluster - 7.45 percent, Management and Business cluster - 4.64 percent). The finding indicated that the majority cluster of syllabus book collection has not met the timeliness requirement of MQA.

4.2 Electronic Resources Collection Analysis

4.2.1 Cumulative Analysis

Table 4.2.1 Cumulative Analysis of Syllabus eBook Collection

RANK	YEAR OF PUBLICATION	FREQUENCY (%)
1	1-5	75
2	6-10	25
3	11-15	0
4	16-20	0
5	21-25	0

Table 4.2.1 displays an analysis of cumulative data that derive from the total of 535 syllabus eBook titles. The collection was ranked

according to their cumulative data in percentage. From the analysis, the researcher found that 75 percent of the syllabus eBook titles were current collections. The data indicated that the library patrons cited the up-to-date syllabus eBook collection (within five years publication age).

4.2.2 Cluster Analysis

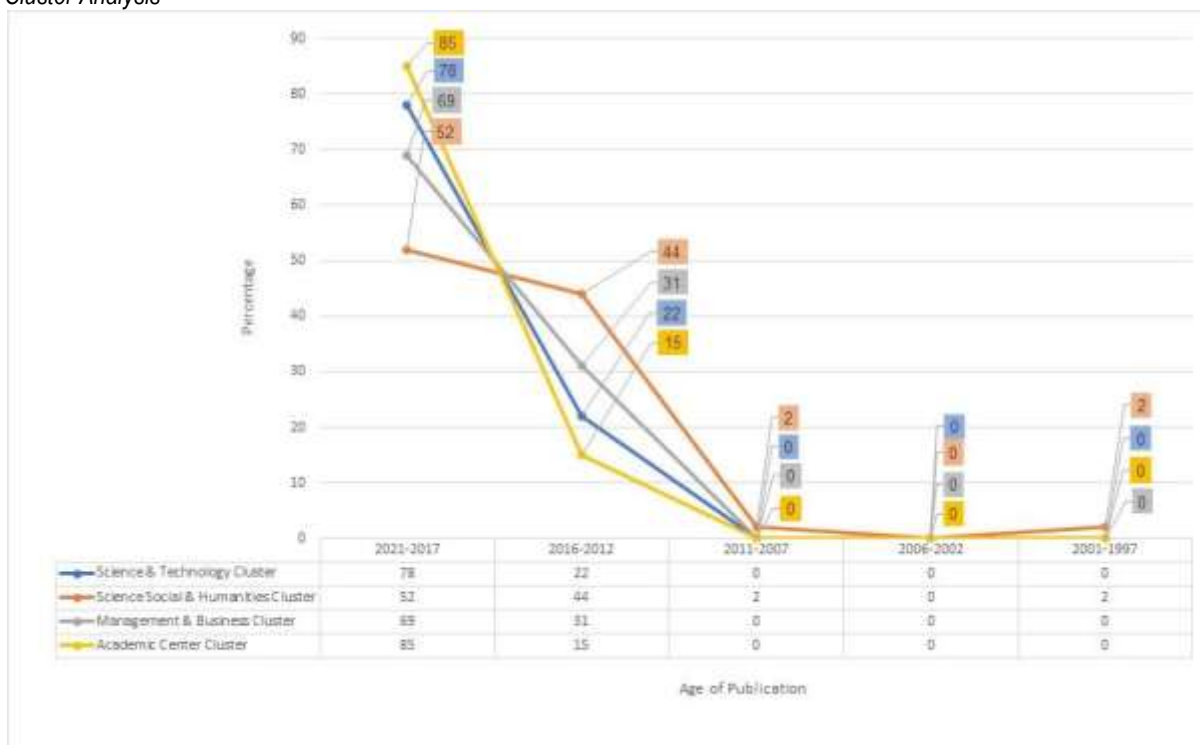


Figure 4.2.2 Cluster Analysis of Syllabus eBook Collection

Figure 4.2.2 displays the cluster analysis consisting of Science & Technology, Social Science & Humanities, Business & Management and Academic Center clusters. Figure 4.2.2 found that all clusters achieved the highest percentages of syllabus eBook titles with 52 percent to 85 percent syllabus eBook collection published within five years of publication. The finding indicated that all clusters of syllabus eBook collection have met the timeliness requirement of MQA.

4.3 Results Of Interview Sessions

These findings have been supported with data from the interview sessions with the HOPA S&T regarding the experiences managing the auditing session. The HOPA S&T stated that the collection should be current as the statement below:

“During the auditing session, a panel of auditors look forward to the current-ness of reference material that should be in terms of five years of publication. Even the research process requires researchers to refer to the current articles within five years of publication to ensure their research-tailored with the current situation”.

The HOPA S&T relate it statement with current situation as below:

“From my opinion, it must be updated (reference resource) to be aligned with current requirement especially in the ‘fast-changing’ area of science & technology, when currently others talk about sustainable development goals (SDG), industrial revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) and VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) world. Even other areas (must be updated) such as social science using current application of technology like banking, management related to SDG, for example smart management, and hotel management related to VUCA world. It is important to update reference resources”.

The HOPA S&T added about the implication of educational resources to the MQA accreditation:

“Based on the COPPA guidelines, there are seven areas that are assessed by the MQA. Area 1 is Programme Development that is more related to area 1 that is assessing curriculum structure. If (as found by the MQA auditor) that reference resource is non-updated, the panel will indicate the condition as OFI (opportunity for improvement) (as a finding). It will affect the process of accreditation. The panel will repeatedly look forward to the faculty action of solving the OFI issue. The process of accreditation will not be running smoothly. It will also affect the image of university”.

Based on the interview above, it indicates the MQA auditors were very concerned with the up-to-dateness of educational resources. To ignore this area of standards can lead the library patrons referring to non-updated reference materials, and being lagged behind by

new innovation or new theory. It could affect graduates' performance during the job seeking prospect.

5.0 Discussion Of Research

The discussion of this study can be viewed from two perspectives: objective and subjective information. The researchers begin with the objective perspective.

5.1 Currency Of Syllabus-Based Library Collection, As Outlined By The MQA Standards

Throughout this study, the researcher found that the duration of five years of publication is used by the MQA to measure the current-ness of syllabus-based collection, even though the duration of current within five years of publication was not written in any guidelines (either published by the government or professional bodies). The duration is applicable to all fields of academic and research. In science and technology, medical sciences, health sciences, sports sciences, the obsolescence of the information is much quicker and more rapid compared to other fields of study such social sciences and humanities, business and management. In this study, the researcher used the MQA standards in order to achieve the consistency in reporting the findings.

The overall results indicate two situations. The printed format of the syllabus-based collection was not responsive to the timeliness as required by the MQA. As a result, the finding revealed the weaker part of the collection. However, not every situation which is weak and low in copies is negative. The condition has allowed the library to develop the electronic format in order to complement the issues that led to the low copies of printed sources. The two factors that highlighted before are the non-availability of copies in the book marketplace and non-up-datedness of the syllabus as well as lack of response from the faculty members. These two factors could contribute to the currency in the syllabus-based library collection.

5.2 The Strengths And Weaknesses Of Syllabus-Based Library Collection, As Outlined By The MQA Standards

This study is an evidence to the academic library to receive its early view of its syllabus-based collection's alignment with the MQA guidelines. The current-ness of the academic library's syllabus-based printed collection was only at 7.25% percent. With the lowest percentage, the condition could affect the library patrons as well as university image. The library patrons were not able to cite the latest findings and technologies, and tend to be around the publications that are available rather than the high impact one.

Another situation will affect the accreditation of certain programmes. The programme's accreditation will be extended for a certain period of time.

5.3 Developing Syllabus-Based Library Collection, As Outlined By The MQA Standards

To assist the library to develop a robust, responsive library collection, the library administrators have to look for alternative library materials to the ones recommended by the faculty members.

5.3.1 Recommendations For The Syllabus Library Materials' Development Solutions

The findings indicated that the currency of syllabus book collection was at the lowest rank. The concern is that the majority of the syllabus titles in academic course information is in the form of printed format rather than in electronic format. There should be an urgent actions as below:

- i. Regular Communication
Communication between the academic library and faculties should take place regularly. It will bring mutual understanding to keep reminding the faculty members to update syllabus titles in course information. It will be much easier to acquire the current title as the publication is available in the market and ready to be supplied by the supplier.
- ii. E-Syllabus Portal
Another recommendation that is important and significant to the academic library management is through developing a syllabus-based collection portal for example e-Syllabus portal. e-Syllabus portal will display a list of syllabus titles that can be used by library and faculty as well. Using International Standard Book number (ISBN) as an indicator to enable system-to-system communication, the syllabus titles listing can be presented as MQA support documents and as a guidance of library book purchasing.

#	Judul/Pengarang/Penerbit :	Fakulti/Kursus	ISBN	Action
7	Judul : Requirements Analysis and System Design Pengarang : Macaulay, L. Penerbit : Addison Wesley Tahun Terbitan : 2004	Fakulti : Kursus : IKK untuk semua program	na	[OPAC]
125	Judul : A new taxonomy: the seven law firm business models Pengarang : MacCraw, B. Penerbit : Adam Smith, Esq Tahun Terbitan : 2014	Fakulti : Kursus : IKK untuk semua program	na	[OPAC]
126	Judul : A Passion for Books Pengarang : Babrowitz, Harold & Bill Kaplan Penerbit : Three River Press Tahun Terbitan : 0	Fakulti : Kursus : IKK untuk semua program	na	[OPAC]
145	Judul : A+ guide to managing and maintaining your PC Pengarang : Andrews, J. Penerbit : US: Thompson Course Technology Tahun Terbitan : 2007	Fakulti : Kursus : IKK untuk semua program	na	[OPAC]

Figure 5.3.1 Listing of Syllabus That Are Non-Available in Library Collection (to be used in book purchasing).

6.0 Conclusion

Collection assessment is as important as developing library collection, especially knowing the level of collection currency. Without collection assessment, any academic library cannot display the current condition of available resources, managing future potential collection such as in terms of funding and grants, formats, and selection or deselection. The existing data could assist library administrators to plan their continuous improvement in library services.

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