Characteristics of Midnight Libraries: Cases of Thailand National Research Universities

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Abstract—This research examined the characteristics of midnight extended library opening hours of Thailand National Research Universities (NRU). Through quantitative analysis approach, a questionnaire form was sent to survey all 9 NRU in November to reflect the library management during the 2/2016 semester. With 100% survey responded, the findings show the characteristics of NRU main libraries that provided midnight extended opening hours in many aspects. These aspects include: the demand groups, periods during the semester to be extended, areas allowed for accessibility, the size of users in comparing to normal periods, main users' activities, top popular visited hours and problems created by students. These results can be used to support university that would like to extend library opening hours, especially to midnight.

Keywords—Library Opening Hours, University Library, 24 Hour Services, midnight.

I. INTRODUCTION

The world is coming to a paperless era. Nevertheless, a university library is still an important place for study, not only for book/information search but also for study areas, especially during exam periods. Vanichvatana [1] found that top research universities in Thailand, especially NRU, extended library opening hours until midnight during exam periods. However, it is very interesting to explore how do these libraries extend and offer services to users. In addition, it is very interesting to learn about types of problems that can occur.

The objective of this research was to examine the characteristics of library opening hours especially during exam periods. The scope covers the main library of each 9 Thailand National Research Universities (NRU), operated during the 1st semester of the academic year 2016 (during September and December, 2016).

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Past researches relating to the topics of extended library hours and 24-hour library fall into two groups: considerations 'Before' adopting and 'After' adopting of extended library hours.

A. Demand for Extended Library Opening Hours

Many literatures showed demands for extended library opening hours. These demands were from many different groups of stakeholders including students [2], students' union [3], faculty [4], and library administrators [5] [6].

Student: The Office of Survey Research of the Western Washington University [2] conducted the follow-up survey based on requests and suggestions from students concerning the extension of library hours. Although the researchers did not claim that the findings represented the University students' population, the findings showed the demand for additional library hours.

Students' Union: Students' Union from Ladoke Akintola University of Technology in South West Nigeria also showed demand for extended library hour services to accommodate students who live in or around the campus areas and *regularly* use the facilities offered by the university library [3].

Faculty: Siriprasoetsin [4] surveyed faculty members of six public universities located in different regions of Thailand, from different academic disciplines: social science and humanity, health science and science and technology. The results showed that 72.2% of the overall respondents were highly demand for 24 hours library services. The levels of demand varied in different academic disciplines: health science = 83.3%, social science and humanity = 72.3% and science and technology = 68.8%.

Library Administrators: Library administrators also demanded for library extended hours. Steele and Walters [5] reported that 25% of the surveyed library administrators requested for the extended hours.

B. Experiences of Extended Library Hours: Characteristics and Concerns

B.1 Characteristics of Extended Library Hours: What is more difficult beyond the question of whether to extend library hours or not is as follows: (1) Finding the right number of extended hours (2) Areas and services and (3) Concerning about behavior of students/users during the extended hours.

(1) Finding the Right Number for Extended Hours: In order to find the right number of library hours, Information required includes both the frequency of library use in normal library hours and the frequency of possible time periods (hours and day) during extended hours. Library opening hours can range from regular office/government hours to 24/7.

Vanichvatana [1] studied library opening hours, both normal hours and exam extended hours, of all 123 universities

in Thailand, as of the 2015 academic year. The 123 universities are categorized into three groups: (1) 61 public universities, (2) 19 autonomous universities and (3) 43 private universities. The 61 public universities consist of three sub-groups: (1) 38 Rajabhat universities, (2) 9 Rajamangala universities and (3) 14 other public universities, from now on are called general public universities [7]. Among the autonomous universities and general public universities, there are 9 universities selected as Thailand National Research Universities (NRU).

NRU have been set up by the Thai Government in 2009 in order to enhance the national educational quality and universities' research to world level.

The analysis showed that normal library opening hours of the Thai university libraries were similar to the government office hours, 8:30am to 16:30pm. During exam, only 17 universities out of 123 extended library closing hours, ranging from 18:30pm to midnight. All 9 National Research Universities of Thailand extend librarian hours until midnight during final exams. Beyond that, 2 universities extended library hours to 24/7 but only for special library areas during final exam. However, there were 3 private universities that were reduce library closing hours.

(2) Areas and Services: There are questions whether libraries should provide 'full' or 'partial' access areas and services.

Areas: Steele [5] showed that 'Study Space' was the top often open area. Other following ranks were 'Stacks', 'Copy facilities', 'Computer Lab Facilities', 'Reference' and 'Food/vending'.

Services: In addition, Steele found that services provided from top available were: 'Individual study space', 'Collaborative study space', Online resources', General collections', 'Circulation', 'Computer labs', 'Reserve readings', 'Reference service', 'Laptop check-out', 'On-call technical support', 'In0person technical support' and 'Special collections'.

(3) Behaviors of Students: Ajala [3] studied experiences of three public universities in South Western Nigeria with regard to extended hours of library services. The survey results from students, who regularly used the library facilities, showed that about 76% (854 out of 1112) agreed or strongly agreed that library was their only study environment so they visit it when they needed to do serious studies.

Nevertheless, there were circulation staff voiced concerns about certain students' behaviors including 'Party', 'Sleep', 'Leaving Food and Debris' in the library [8].

B.2 Concerns for Extended Library Hours: In the management of extended library hours, especially till midnight or 24 hours, there are 3 main concerns: (1) Concerns about staffs (2) Concern about safety and security and (3) Concern about availability of budgets.

(1) *Staffs*: Staffs who will be assigned during extended library hours are normally (a) Support staffs, from regular hours, who reassign to work paid-overtime, (b) Paid volunteer students and/or (c) Security personnel. The case to hire new staff to cover expanded hours was fewer than hired students [5].

However, during extended hours, there were concerning about lack of reference assistance [8]. Limitation of library staff can be a cause to restricted use to parts of library and restricted access to authorized patrons.

(2) *Safety and Security*: 'Safety' and 'Security' issues were high to medium concerns as found by Foote and McManus [9]. There were fears for personal safety of users-student and workers-employees [8]. Ways to solve security concern include: staffed security desk, video cameras and alarm systems, key cards, and motion or glass break sensors [5] [10].

(3) *Budget*: Extended library hours do required additional costs to operate, especially to pay for library staffs. However, it is crucial to balance services against cost spend [2] and weigh between cost and prestige and other benefits gain [10]. It is possible to un-staff [8] or using volunteers instead of hiring overtime staffs. Funding was from campus administration and student groups. In rare case, funding was from increasing of tuition to support generous hours [5].

III. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This research conducted quantitative analysis approach. The research team created a questionnaire for and surveyed all 9 Thailand National Research Universities (NRU) in October, 2016. Questionnaire forms were sent to each university library staffs for considerations. Once filled the questionnaires were sent back via emails.

IV. FINDINGS

Based on the data from the 9 NRU, the followings describe the characteristics of open and close hours during normal and exam periods, periods that each library provides extended library opening hours, access areas provided, users' activities during extended library hours, number of users access during extended periods comparing to normal periods, popular access hours and problems caused by students.

A. *Demain for Extended Library Hours*

To understand the demand for library extended opening hours, the questionnaire provided four choices for this question including: 'Request from Students', 'Request from Faculty', 'Request from Patents, Alumni, Society' and 'Initiative from University Management.' Eight respondents out of nine stated that 'Students' were the main reason for the extended library hours. Two universities stated that both 'Students' and 'University Management' were both the main demand for the extending. Only one university stated that 'University Management' alone was the main demand for the extending. Figure 1 displays the above discussion.
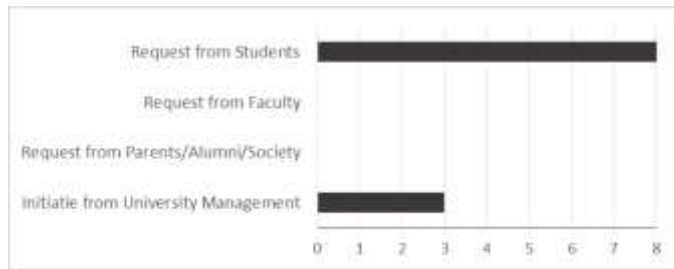
FIGURE 1: MAIN DEMAND FOR EXTENDED LIBRARY HOURS

B. *The Characteristics of Opening and Closing Times*

The summary of the operating hours during the normal hours and examination are as follows:

- Normal Opening Hours0
  - o Opening Hours

    The normal opening hours are between 8:00 am and 9:00 am, except one university open 24/7 during normal opening hours. The mode is at 8:00 am, with the frequency of 6 out of 9 or 66.67%.
  - o Closing Hours

    The normal closing hours have broader range than the opening hours, between 20:00 pm and 22:00 pm, with one university closes at 24:00 am. The mode is at 21:00 pm, with the frequency of 4 out of 9 or 44.44%.
- Exam Opening Hours
  - o The opening hours during weekday of exam periods of most NRU are at 8:00am, except 1 university open at 8:30 and 1 university open 24/7.
  - o All 9 NRU extended library hours during weekday exam period until 24:00am or close to 24:00am (23:30pm).
  - o 5 out of 9 (55.56%) NRU open until 24:00 both weekday and weekend.
  - o 2 NRU open 24/7 during exam periods.

The opening and closing hours during both normal and exams are as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: NORMAL AND EXAM OPENING HOURS OF EACH NRU

Name of University	Regular Library Opening Hours		Exam Period Library Opening Hours	
	Weekday	Weekend	Weekday	Weekend
Chulalongkorn University	8:00-21:00	9:00-18:00	8:00-24:00	9:00-24:00
Mahidol University	8:00-21:00	9:00-17:00[1]	8:00-24:00	9:00-17:00
Chiang Mai University	8:00-21:00	10:00-18:00	8:00-23:30	10:00-18:00
Thammasat University	0:00-24:00	0:00-24:00	0:00-24:00[2]	0:00-24:00[2]
Kasetsart University	8:00-20:00	11:00-19:00	8:00-24:00[3]	9:00-19:00[3]
Khon Kaen University	9:00-20:30[4]	9:00-20:30[4]	0:00-24:00	0:00-24:00
King Mongkukt's University of Technology Thonburi	8:00-21:00	8:00-21:00	8:00-24:00	8:00-24:00
Prince of Songkla University	8:30-22:00	9:00-19:30	8:30-23:30	9:00-21:30
Suranaree University of Technology	8:00-20:00	9:00-17:00	8:00-24:00[5]	9:00-24:00[5]

Note: Applied for the main library of each NRU
[1]: During normal opening hours - Open on Saturday only
[2]: Extended 1 week before midterm and final
[3]: Midterm extended 3 weeks until 24:00,
    Final extended 4 weeks, the 1st week till 24:00, the 2nd-4th weeks open 24/7.
[4]: Provide 24/7 Study Center
[5]: Extended 2 weeks before midterm and final

C. *Periods Extended Library Hours*

The majority of the NRU extended library opening hours 'Only during Midterm and Final,' with 5 out of 9 universities. There were 2 NRU that offered 24/7 library opening hours for 'the Whole Semester, Everyday'. The other 2 NRU extended library hours 'Only during Final'. Figure 2 shows the periods that the 9 NRU semester provided that extended library hours.
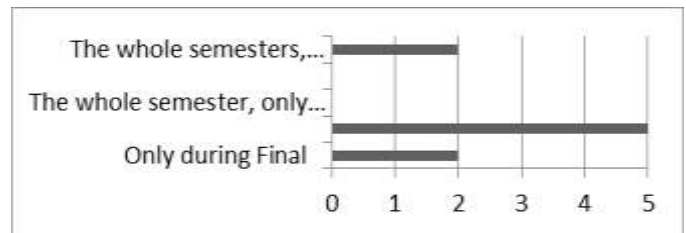

FIGURE 2: PERIODS PROVIDE EXTENDED LIBRARY HOURS

D. *Access Areas Provided during Extended Library Hours*

During extended library hours, library administrator can allow users for either full access, as in normal library hours, or partial access. There were only 3 NRU that allow full access during extended library hours. The other 6 NRU allowed only partial access to certain parts of each main library. Some universities provided special study areas, some provided the ground floor of the library. Figure 3 shows these information.
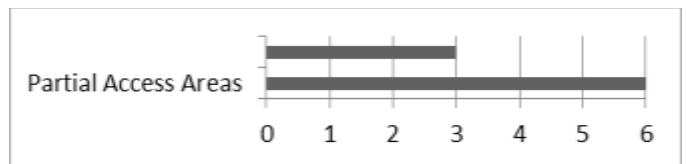

FIGURE 3: THE NUMBER OF NRU LIBRARIES THAT PROVIDE NORMAL FULL ACCESS AREAS VERSUS PARTIAL ACCESS AREAS

E. *Users' Activities during Extended Library Hours*

Overall users' activities during extended library hours included 'Group Study', 'Self Study', 'Book Search/ Borrow-Return', 'Tutorial' and 'Audio Visual Aids', as shown in Figure 4.

However, when asked the survey respondents to select 'the Main Activity' that users did during the extended hours, the top popular activity among the 9 NRU main libraries was 'Self Study'. 'Group Study' and 'Book Search/Borrow-Return' were the other two top popular users' activities, as shown in Figure 5.
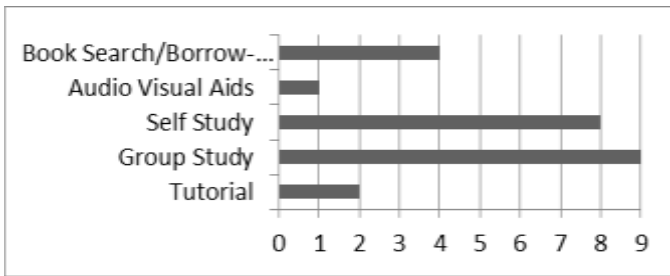
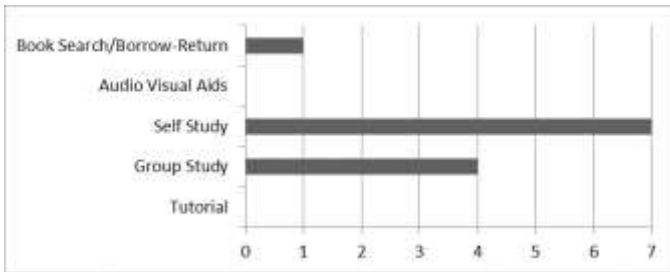FIGURE 4: **OVERALL** USERS' ACTIVITIES DURING EXTENDED LIBRARY HOURS

FIGURE 5: **MAIN** USERS' ACTIVITIES DURING EXTENDED LIBRARY HOURS

F. Number of Users during Extended Periods Comparing to Normal Periods

When asked the respondents to compare the number of users between extended periods to normal periods, 6 out of 9 NRU reflected that there were more students came to use the libraries' facilities and areas during extended periods than normal periods. 1 responded that there was similar users and the other 2 responded for fewer users. Figure 6 reflects the above findings.
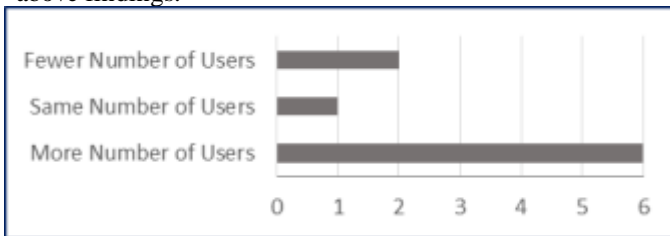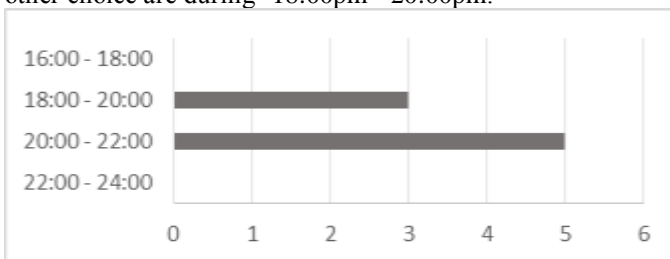

FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF USERS DURING EXTENDED PERIODS COMPARING TO DURING NORMAL PERIODS

G. Popular Users' Access Hours

Respondents were asked to select a period of extended hours that are the top crowded by users. The 4 choices are 16:00pm - 18:00pm, 18:00pm - 20:00pm, 20:00pm - 22:00pm and 22:00pm - 24:00pm. As shown in Figure 7, the top crowded users during extended hours was '20:00pm - 22:00pm.' The other choice are during '18:00pm - 20:00pm.'

NOTE: THE ANSWER FROM 1 UNIVERSITY IS AN ERROR AS THE RESPONDENT CHOSE ALL 4 PERIODS OF TIME.
FIGURE 7: POPULAR USERS' ACCESS HOURS DURING EXTENDED LIBRARY HOURS PERIODS

H. Problems from Users during Extended Library Hours

Students can cause many types of problems in a library [8]. The questionnaire asked the respondents to choose any types of such problems. The results show that the top problem is 'Leave Food Debris' inside libraries. The second most frequent problem and others are: 'Noisy Talk/Not Study' problem, 'Sleep', 'Not enough seats', 'Leave a lot of Garbage' (especially leave garbage outside garbage baskets), 'Dirty Toilet' (have no cleaners during extended hours) and 'Bring Food/Drinks inside Libraries.' Figure 8 summaries the frequency of the above explanations.,
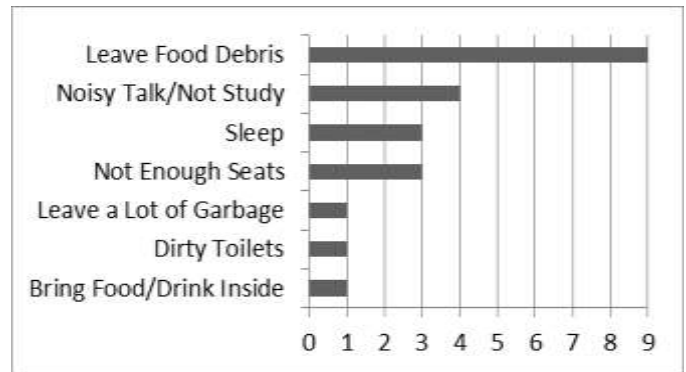

FIGURE 8: PROBLEMS CAUSED BY USERS DURING EXTENDED LIBRARY HOURS

V. CONCLUSIONS

The research analysis results can be concluded are as follows:

- The main demand for extended library opening hours in 8 out of 9 NRU was 'Students.' In addition, 'University Management' was also influenced in the demand in 2 universities and was the sole demand in 1 university.
- During exam, all 9 Thailand National Research Universities extended main library opening hours to midnight. 2 NRU provided 24/7 library opening hours.
- Most NRU main libraries provide extended library opening hours 'Only during Midterm and Final.'
- The majority of NRU main libraries provided accessibility to only 'Partial Serviced Areas.'
- However, there was 1 university that provided accessibility to 'Full Serviced Areas' and '24/7.'
- For users' activities, there were several activities students came for during extended hours. The top activities were 'Self Study' and 'Group Study.' Other less frequency performed were 'Book Search/Borrow-Return', 'Tutorial' and 'Audio Visual Aids.'
- Comparison between 'Extended' and 'Normal' library hours, 6 out of 9 NRU, there were 'More' students visited during extended hours than normal hours. And, the most popular visited extended hours was during '20:00pm – 22:00pm.'
- About problems created by users, the top most frequently occurred was 'Leave Food Debris.' The other problems listed from less top most frequently occurred are 'Noisy Talk/Not Study', 'Sleep', 'Not Enough Seat', Leave a lot of Garbage', 'Dirty Toilet' and 'Bringing in Food/Drinks.'

- The research results show the characteristics of NRU main libraries that provided extended opening hours many aspects.

VI. DISCUSSIONS

The following points can be raised as follows:

- The findings show meaningful results how top research universities in Thailand, NRU, offer their main library opening hours during both normal and exam periods.
- University that would like to extend library opening hours can apply the findings as consideration factors including hour of a day to be extended, extended period of a semester, areas of accessibility, popular users' activities and problems to be occurred.

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