

POST GRADUATE RESEARCH IN THE HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

Zainab Awang Ngah and Goi Sook Sze
MLIS Program, Faculty of Computer Science
& Information Technology, University of Malaya
email: zainab@fsktm.um.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Studies research trends in the Humanities based on Master and Doctoral dissertations submitted to the University of Malaya library between 1984 and 1994. Dissertation submission pattern increases 5 fold since the 1960s and the main contributors were post graduate students enrolled at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Education. Within the former faculty, the top three contributors were from the Departments of Malay studies, Islamic Studies and English studies. Researches were focussed on local studies and the highest research activity was indicated by researchers in Language and literature. Results from trend studies helped to identify the humanities research population, research trends and strength for effective resource allocation and formulation of plans to meet information needs amongst Humanities researchers.

KEYWORDS: Humanities research; Research trends; Malaysian studies.

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries have a responsibility to support research needs of its institutional researchers and this support can be effectively planned for if the trend of researches within its institution is known. One of academic library's objective therefore, is to achieve completeness, comprehensiveness and a totality in the coverage of literature needed by its institution's existing researchers and those projected for the future (*Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, 1987). An effective segmentation and strategic planning of resource allocation for research needs should inevitably involve identifying the research

population (both tenured academic staff and post graduate enrollments), the trend of current and past research and finding out researchers' information needs and use. This paper attempts to investigate the first two issues, while the last issue, because of its complexity merits its own attention and hence is beyond the scope of this paper.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to examine the trend of post graduate research in the humanities undertaken at the University of Malaya in order to find answers to the following questions;

(a) What is the quantity of researches carried out in the Humanities compared

with other disciplines between 1984 and 1994?;

(b) What is the distribution pattern of Humanities research by type of degree?

(c) What is the trend of research submitted within the disciplines of language, Literature, History, Religion and Philosophical studies between 1984 and 1994?;

(d) Does Humanities research emanate only from the Faculty of Arts or do other faculties contribute a fair share of total research ?

(e) What are the subject orientations of Humanities researches undertaken?

It is hoped that such information would be of use when formulating strategic plans for resource allocations to substantiate support of research needs in the Humanities.

SAMPLE AND METHODS

The sample frame for this study comprises Masters and Doctor of Philosophy dissertations submitted by Humanities researchers to the University of Malaya between the years 1984 and 1994. An 11 year span is considered adequate to indicate research trends and strengths. The Humanities is a group of educational disciplines distinguished in content and method from the Physical and Biological sciences and, less decisive, from the Social Sciences (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Humanities study centres on the life of man. The core of Humanities discipline in modern universities include the study of Language and Literature (ancient and modern), the Fine Arts, Philosophy, History and Religious studies.

Each post graduate student (Masters and Ph.D candidates) enrolled at the University of Malaya are required to submit a copy of their dissertation to the University of Malaya Library. Dissertations are kept for reference at the Za'ba Memorial Library. The Library publishes bibliographic information about the theses it received in each December issue of its quarterly newsletter, *Kekal Abadi*. The process of collecting data about dissertations submitted between 1984 and 1994 involved perusing the December issues of *Kekal Abadi* published within the years under study. Subsequently the title pages of the dissertations in the humanities were photocopied and bibliographic information about the theses were input into a database created under CDS/ISIS version 3.07. From the database, portions of each bibliographic record are extracted for analyses of trends.

RESULTS

(a) Quantity of Research in the Humanities Between 1984-1994

Table 1 indicates the total number of post graduate students enrolled in the University of Malaya between 1984 and 1994. The disciplines listed with asterisks are those identified as being in the Humanities. The table indicates that enrolment in the Humanities constitute about 23% (2,429) of total enrolments within the 11 year period under study and this cumulatively is substantial when compared to the other popular disciplines such as Education (19.5%, 2,058), Economics and Administration (17%,

1824) and the Sciences (14%, 1,480). On the whole post graduate enrolments in the Science and Technology programs were proportionally smaller (4,003, 30%) when compared with enrolments in the non-science disciplines (6,511, 62%). The table hence provide evidence that information needs of Humanities researchers should be given due attention since these group of researchers constitute the largest percentage of total post graduate population.

Table 1: Post Graduate Student Enrolments in the University of Malaya Between 1984-1994.*

Faculty	Total Enrollments ('84-94)	%
Econs & Admin	1824	17.35
Engineering	521	4.96
Education	2058	19.57
Dentistry	18	0.17
Medicine	1137	10.81
Science	1480	14.08
*Arts & Soc Sc.	*1544	*14.69
*Syariah	*155	*1.47
*Usuluddin	*179	*1.70
Law	200	1.90
Inst. Adv Stud.	779	7.41
*lang & Lit	*551	*5.24
Comp. Sci.	68	0.65
TOTAL	10,514	100.00

* Annual Reports of the University of Malaya, 1984-1995.

Table 2 indicates the total number of Master and Doctoral Dissertation submitted to the University of Malaya Be-

tween 1984 and 1994. The table indicates that the Humanities comprises 18% (259) of total 1403 dissertations submitted during the eleven year period. The highest percentage of dissertations came from the Social Science disciplines (46%, 647), followed by those in the Natural and Applied Sciences (25%, 357). Only 10% (140) of the dissertations were in the field of Medicine.

Table 2: Masters and Doctoral Dissertations Submitted to the University of Malaya Between 1984 and 1994

Broad Discipline	No. of Dissertations n=1,403 ('84-94)	100%
Humanities	259	18%
Soc. Sci.	647	46%
Nat. & Appl Sci.	357	25%
Medicine	140	10%

The above table indicates that although post graduate enrolments in the Humanities is higher than the other disciplines, the submission rate tended to be smaller in number. This may be a reflection of the nature of Humanities research itself which involves the use of of a wider range of materials, depending on a "mosaic-like" configuration of texts, a web of primary and secondary literature, a mixture of original texts, manuscripts and translations from several collections and depositories (Weintraub, 1980; Stone, 1982; Cullars, 1992, Horacek, 1993; Sand-

strom, 1994). Humanities research seems to take a considerably longer time to complete than those in the Social Sciences, Applied and Pure Science disciplines. A closer look at Humanities research over a longer range of years (1960-1990s) indicates that the number of submissions is on the increase almost over 5 times since the 1960s (Table 3).

Table 3: Number of Dissertations in the Humanities Submitted to the University of Malaya Between 1960s and 1990s

Year	No Submitted	%
1960s	30	6.9
70s	96	22.3
80s	131	30.4
90s	174	40.4

(b) Distribution of Humanities Dissertation by Type of Degree

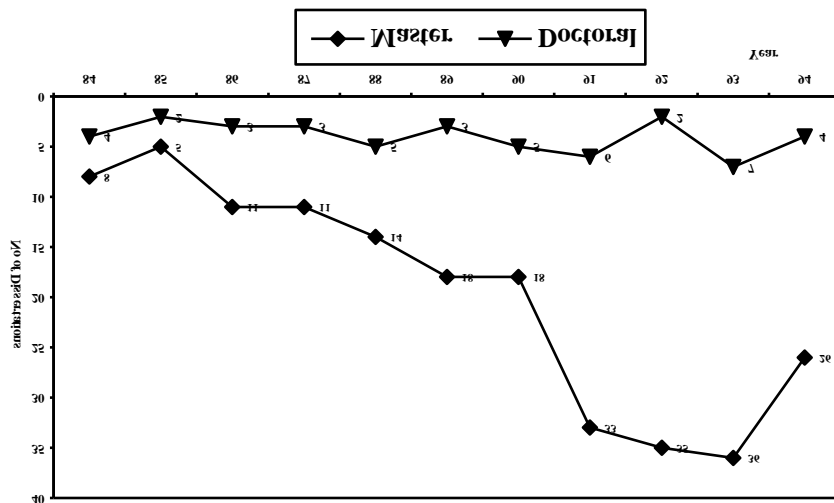
Table 4 shows the total number of master and doctoral dissertations in the Humanities submitted to the University of Malaya between 1984 and 1994. Figure 1 provides the graphical representation of submission trends by the type of degree awarded

A total of 259 dissertations were submitted within the eleven year period which comprises 215 (83%) of master and 44 (17%) Ph.D. theses. The yearly average of submissions was 19 for masters and 4 for doctoral post graduate dissertations within the 11 year period.

Table 4: Total Number of Master and Doctoral Dissertation in the Humanities Between 1984 and 1994

Year	Master		Doctoral		Cumulative Total	
	n=215	%	n=44	%	n=259	%
1984	8	3.7	4	9.1	12	4.6
1985	5	2.3	2	4.5	19	7.3
1986	11	5.1	3	6.8	33	12.7
1987	11	5.1	3	6.8	47	18.1
1988	14	6.5	5	11.4	66	25.5
1989	18	8.4	3	6.8	87	33.6
1990	18	8.4	5	11.4	110	42.5
1991	33	15.4	6	13.6	149	57.5
1992	35	16.3	2	4.5	186	71.8
1993	36	16.7	7	16.0	229	88.4
1994	26	12.1	4	9.1	259	100.0

Figure 1: Total Number of Dissertations Submitted By Type of Degree (1984-1994)



(c) Pattern of Humanities Research By Broad Disciplines

The 259 dissertations were subjected to categorisation in accordance to the Library of Congress broad classification scheme. In accordance to the scheme the subjects which encompasses the Humanities comprises the following;

- Bs - Religion and Philosophical studies
- Ds - History
- Ps - Language and Literature.
- Ns and Ms - Music and the Fine Arts

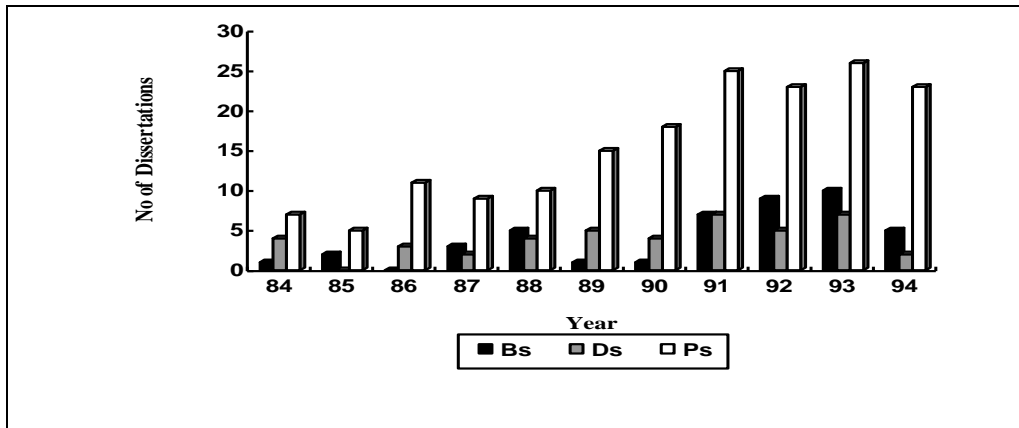
This study have excluded dissertations in the Ns and Ms categorys since the number is too small.

The field of Language and Literature (Ps) is a highly productive discipline which continuously led in the total number of theses submission throughout the 11 years under study (Table 5; Figure 2). In this broad discipline, the total number of master dissertations were 84% (34) of total submission. The number of doctoral dissertations submitted in this discipline was 16% (7). In the field of History, the number of master theses submission was 63% (27) while Ph.D theses was 37% (16) of total submission in this discipline. In the discipline of Language and Literature submissions at the masters level was 88% (151) and Ph.D was 12% (21) of total submissions.

Table 5: Dissertations By Broad Disciplines and Types of Degree (1984-1994)

Bs			Ds			Ps			Total
M	Ph.D	n=44	M	Ph.D	n=43	M	Ph.D	n=172	'84-94
37	7	44	27	16	43	151	21	172	259

Figure 2: Pattern of Dissertations Submitted By Broad Disciplines



(d) Distribution of Dissertations By Faculty

The retrieval of dissertation titles categorised in the Humanities was based on these classed under Ps, Bs and Ds. The titles retrieved were checked against information available in the CDS/ISIS database which indicates the faculty to which the dissertations were submitted to. This matching exercise indicates that dissertations categorised in the Humanities comes from 7 faculties; Arts and So-

cial Sciences; Education; Language and Linguistics; Syariah; Usuluddin; Economics and Administration and Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of Malaya (Table 6). As expected, the highest submission was from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences with 126 (49%) dissertations. This is followed by the Faculty of Education with 63 (24%); the Faculty of Language and Linguistics with 43 (17%); and the Faculties of Syariah and Usuluddin which altogether accounts for 18 (7%) titles.

Table 6: Dissertation Distribution By Faculties

Faculty	Bs	Ds	Ps	Total	
	n=44	n=43	n=172	n=259	%
Arts & Social Sciences	25	28	73	126	49
Education	1	8	54	63	24
Language & Linguistics	0	1	42	43	17
Syariah	11	0	0	11	4
Usuluddin	5	2	0	7	3
Economics & Admin.	2	2	2	6	2
Inst Advanced Studies	0	2	1	3	1

Table 7: Dissertation Distribution By Departments Within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Departments	Bs	Ds	Ps	Total	
	n=25	n=28	n=73	n=126	%
Malay Studies	2	2	28	32	25
Islamic Studies	19	2	3	24	19
English Studies	0	0	17	17	14
Chinese Studies	2	3	11	16	13
Indian Studies	1	2	10	13	10
History.	0	11	0	11	9
Southeast Asian Studies	0	4	1	5	4
Anthrop & Sociology	0	4	0	4	3
Creative Writing	1	0	3	4	3

A closer look at the distribution of the 126 dissertations submitted to the various Departments within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences revealed that the top 6 contributors were the Department of Malay Studies which emerged as the highest contributor with 25% (32) of total titles; followed by the Department of Islamic Studies with 19% (24); English studies with 14% (17); Chinese Studies with 13% (16); Indian Studies with 10% (13) and the History Department with 9% (11) titles (Table 7). This pattern revealed that vernacular and ethnic studies were popular amongst Arts Graduates and clearly indicate where the emphasis of resource allocation should be aimed at.

(e) Subject Orientation of the Humanities Dissertations

The 259 dissertation titles in the Humanities were checked against the University of Malaya Library Online Public

Access Catalogue to ascertain the subject coverage of the dissertations concerned. For each title the full bibliographic information was identified, in particular the subject headings allotted to the titles. In this way, the subject coverage of each title were ascertained. In cases where the dissertations were assigned more than one subject headings, the first heading is chosen to represent the most relevant. The 259 dissertation titles were then categorised into 3 broad groupings; those which were concerned with Malaysian Studies; Asean Studies and Other area studies. The majority of the dissertations in the Humanities were local studies (Table 8) orienting towards investigating Malaysian aspects of religions and philosophy (Islamic studies, Islamic doctrines, Islamic mysticism and economies, Chinese and Indian culture, language, literature, religion and philosophy); studies on Malaysian history and race (social, political and ethnic conditions, foreign relations, national

security and public administration); Malaysian languages and literature (grammars, lexicography, pronunciation, translating, fictional, poetical and dramatical writings of local authors).

Table 8: Subject Orientation of Humanities Research

Subject Orientations	Bs	Ds	Ps	Total n=259	%
Malaysia	28	27	135	190	73
Asean	1	10	3	14	6
Others	13	0	42	55	21

CONCLUSION

The analysis of post graduate dissertations submitted to the University of Malaya between 1984 and 1994 attempts to highlight the quantity and trends of research in the Humanities. The study also compares post graduate enrolments between the Humanities and other disciplines to identify the areas of resource needs and research strength in the Humanities. This information may be of use when planning strategies to support information needs of researchers. In summary the study found the following trends;

(a) Researches in the Humanities is on the increase with more enrolments and submission at the Master's than the Doc-toral level;

(b) The highest activity revolved around studies concerning local vernacular languages, literature, culture, religion

and philosophical studies, which over the years dominate Humanities researches.

(c) Although the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences constitute the highest contributor of research in the Humanities, other faculties are also contributors; such as the Faculties of Education, Languages and Linguistics; Syariah, Usuluddin and the Institute of Advanced Studies. This may be a reflection of the increasingly inter-disciplinary nature of studies in the Humanities where the cross-over into Social Sciences is becoming frequent.

(d) Most Humanities researches are oriented towards Malaysian or Asean studies.

One important factor emerged from the study. Researches in the Humanities are extremely local oriented, aiming at identifying local problems and suggesting solutions. As such the collection of resources both primary and secondary, current and retrospective, which are available locally or abroad, regardless of the cost must be given due priority in order to service Humanities researchers' information need. An equally important strategy is to identify what is actually being used by post graduate researchers in the process of undertaking research activity which, when combined with research trend studies may provide insights into the type of resources which is needed.

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