

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the era of an information society, information is most important for work and study. There are many factors creating information needs among people. Increasing community size makes administration more complex. Development of group and class interests further creates social differentiation. Technological innovation produces new products and processes, new occupations and skills, new information and requires people to be more creative. Social welfare provision allows people to receive more services from the government and social welfare agencies. The increase in life expectancy allows people to have a longer life. All these social development factors lead to greater information demands because people are moving into the technology challenging future. They have to deal with new electronic systems, unusual economic conditions, downsizing, different management styles, development in the field of health science, etc. They have to know and understand all the parameters of change, attain as much knowledge and experience as possible in order to adapt to new technologies, use information for their decision making and try to implement their expectation in life.

Classic education simply required students to be able to read and write (Ronsky & Gor Sawatpanich, 1966) but now students need to gain more knowledge and experience, so information resources have become more significant. The development in education requires teachers, researchers and students to cultivate new ideas and

knowledge which leads to greater information demands especially in an information oriented society where changes occur rapidly. Information provided must be accurate reliable and accessible. In resource supported instruction, the library seems to be one of the critical success factors because the library functions as an information center that can help teachers and students in the educational process to access information.

Development in the field of public health requires teachers, researchers and students to cultivate new ideas and knowledge in public health which leads to greater public health information demand too, particularly in an information society where health science changes rapidly. The WHO stated that health workers in many developing countries can not access up-to-date information due to lack of technology support and lack of well-organized information sources (Pakenham-Walsh, et al., 1997). The library is an important place to gather, conserve, and make available information to everyone. With the advent of new technologies at an increased and indomitable pace, library institutions are forced to make and accept changes. As technology and its increased changes affect the educational environment, libraries are made aware that increased access to information requires to keep up with these changes. Educational reform promotes student-centered instruction and more self-learning is needed, therefore a library is a very important place to accommodate self-learning. An academic library is a critical success factor for education since it is an information resource and users can access it freely. A library acts as a supportive resource for the teaching-learning process and research in academic institutes (Srysuda Kochasanee, 1981) by providing information and searching technology which can respond to users' needs and accommodate rapid access. In addition in the exponentially multiplying supply of

information, the library serves as a gatekeeper to filter for the information system . In the publishing environment, the mandate of the editorial and referencing process is to “let in the good” and ”keep out the bad”(J.M. & Nugent, 1995)

The National Education Act aims at educational quality assurance. Every educational institute has to pass the education quality assessment from the Office of National Education Standard and Quality Assessment (Marnoch Ketkamol, 2001). A library is one of the nine constituents requested in quality control.

Sirinthon College of Public Health - Chonburi (SCPH-C) is an educational institute for the production of public health care workers . This College is also affiliated with Mahidol University (MU) for its Public Health curriculum. The College has launched an Educational Quality Assurance (EQA) project, initiated by the National Education Act with the inclusion of Mahidol University requirements to ensure teaching-learning process and output quality. It is necessity for the SCPH-C library to instruct the development project related to PDCA cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle : A cycle of quality) (Suwimol Wongvanich, 2000) of EQA project of the college. The aims of the library development project are problem solving, better addressing users' demands and passing the EQA assessment standards.

This project is the first step of the library development project, and aims to investigate needs and problems of SCPH-C library users, which then will become an input for a situation analysis and strategic planning process for the library development.