

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Rationale

In the maelstrom of globalize world, the circulation of information is more rapid than ever. Information plays a more significant role in people's life. People around the globe are more closely and easily connected to each other than ever. Recognizing the importance of the communication system and technologies in the development of the country, Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra, Thailand's then Prime Minister, vowed to bring new technology into the bureaucratic administration, especially in the educational system of the country. In response to the government's policy, Chiang Mai University has adopted a policy of using technological advances to support the teaching and learning process conducted s at the university. Its prime goal is to become a research university and a leader of academic institutions in the northern region of Thailand.

In compliance with Chiang Mai University's goal to be the research university, the Central Library has recently equipped itself with advanced technologies to become an automated "electronic library or e-Library." The main concept of being an e-library is to provide a wide array of electronic resources and, simultaneously, to develop printed resources into digital files in order to extend service to users on campus and around the world. In this period of time, most library users are able to access information in seconds, and as the demand of searching and retrieving information is incessantly increasing. It is essential that, libraries be well prepared for such prompt services at all times. To achieve this goal, it is important that online resources be provided. The library's board consequently decided to purchase online databases, hoping that the e-resources will directly fulfill the users' needs worldwide.

Libraries are the most valuable sources of information and vital for the leading research organization. The response to this fact, libraries technology advancements are being continuously adopted day by day in order to improve the efficiency of service. In addition, online computer network are immensely expanding the scope of library services. In other words, users could access to needed information with high speed retrieving system at any time and from anywhere. This online service was then considered as an essential service of modern libraries. Modern researchers can search for many sources of information from a single point without worrying about locations of sources, while the researcher in the past had to go to many libraries to collect data of different subjects. The online system provides enormous advantages for users everywhere in the world. In Thailand, modern libraries such as Chulalongkorn University Resource Center, Thammasat University, Kasetsart University, Khon Kaen University and Mahidol University are also equipped with Online Databases Service.

Online Database is provided for online searching and retrieval in the academic institutions, organizations, universities, schools, and many places around the world. It is a system that helps exchange information between center terminal (host) of provider and end users through telecommunication system (Narong Pombuppha. 1997 : 2). Online databases are commercial databases which libraries subscribe for the benefits of their own users. Subject-specific databases contain in-depths information of specific subjects such as Chemistry, Biology, Psychology, Physics, Pharmacology, Engineering, Health Sciences, Mathematics, Agriculture, Computer and Information Technology, Law, Marketing, Business, Economic, Finance, Accounting, Humanities, as well as Social sciences while some databases contained multidisciplinary academic subjects. Contents of each database comprise of various types of data such as journals, abstracts, full texts, dissertations, theses, proceedings, transactions, newsletters and publications. Most online databases are categorized by individual records that can be accessed and searched via computer through the Internet or an organization's intranet. The cost of online database varies on content and operative system of that database. One fact that might be neglected by most people is that online databases are bought

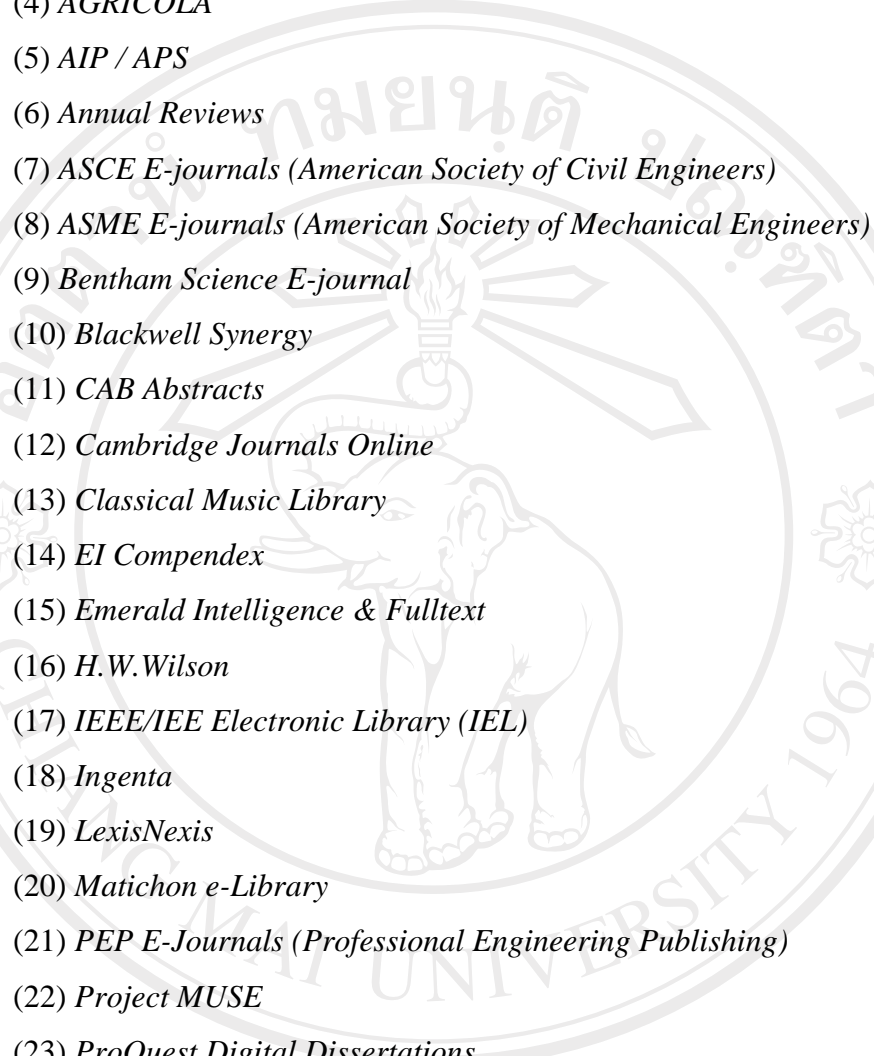
with a great cost. Ironically, a great deal of budget investing for online databases cannot benefit the users as it should be.

According to the Chiang Mai University Library's statistics on the online database users, however, it was found that only a small number of students use online databases for searching information (Chiang Mai University Library: 2000). In 2000, when online databases were launched, the number of students who used this service was less than 5%. From 2001 to 2003, the number increased slightly to 7%, 9% and 10%, respectively (Chiang Mai University Library: 2001, 2002, 2003). This using rate was considered unsatisfactory since the more number of uses are expected. It is still a question why this service is not greatly used by undergraduate students of Chiang Mai University. There might be some factors influencing the decision making of the students resulting in the little use of the databases which need to be explored. Furthermore, the finding of this research can be used as a guideline for the library's administrators to improve the library's online databases service in the future since it is hoped that the rising number of online databases users will help the library to achieve its goal in becoming an "e-Library" and will help the university to be able to reach the status of a research university as well.

Previously, there were research studies on the use of some online databases such as CD-ROM database, *ScienceDirect* database, and Medical database conducted at various faculty libraries of Chiang Mai University and at other universities in Thailand. However, the use of multidisciplinary online databases service at the Central library, Chiang Mai University has not yet been explored. Therefore, it should be worthwhile to carry out a study in this area since the findings might enhance the capacity of services, as the administrators will be able to further adjust the service management to suit the end users' demand.

The online databases service at Chiang Mai University Library's consists of 30 databases as follows:

(1) *Academic Research Premier*

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- (2) *ACM Digital Library*  
 (3) *ACS Publications*  
 (4) *AGRICOLA*  
 (5) *AIP / APS*  
 (6) *Annual Reviews*  
 (7) *ASCE E-journals (American Society of Civil Engineers)*  
 (8) *ASME E-journals (American Society of Mechanical Engineers)*  
 (9) *Bentham Science E-journal*  
 (10) *Blackwell Synergy*  
 (11) *CAB Abstracts*  
 (12) *Cambridge Journals Online*  
 (13) *Classical Music Library*  
 (14) *EI Compendex*  
 (15) *Emerald Intelligence & Fulltext*  
 (16) *H.W.Wilson*  
 (17) *IEEE/IEE Electronic Library (IEL)*  
 (18) *Ingenta*  
 (19) *LexisNexis*  
 (20) *Matichon e-Library*  
 (21) *PEP E-Journals (Professional Engineering Publishing)*  
 (22) *Project MUSE*  
 (23) *ProQuest Digital Dissertations*  
 (24) *ScienceDirect*  
 (25) *SciFinder Scholar*  
 (26) *Springer LINK*  
 (27) *Taylor & Francis*  
 (28) *Thomson Gale Testing & Education Reference Center*  
 (29) *Web of Science*  
 (30) *Thai Theses Online*

These 30 databases will be carefully studied in terms of recent status, opinions and obstacles that users are facing with. The databases in this study are categorized

into 2 types which are multidisciplinary databases and subject-specific databases. Both of them will be analyzed in terms of their present status. That is, how they are used by the undergraduate students or the subjects selected for this study.

## **2. Purposes of the study**

- 1). To study the present status of the online database utilization available in the Central Library, Chiang Mai University.
- 2). To identify the factors influencing the use of online databases at the Central Library, Chiang Mai University.

## **3. Research questions**

- 1). What is the present status of online databases that are being used by CMU undergraduate students at the Central Library, Chiang Mai University?
- 2). What are the factors influencing the CMU undergraduate students' use of online databases at the Central Library, Chiang Mai University?

## **4. Research design, scope and methods**

This study is carried out to investigate the factors influencing the use of online references databases service provided at the Central Library, Chiang Mai University. The method used in this study is questionnaires which will be disseminated to CMU undergraduate students who enrolled to study in the academic year 2003 to 2006. The statistical methods used are percentage, means, and standard deviation.

## **5. Application advantages**

It is hoped that this study will be the baseline data concerning the online databases usage at the Central Library, Chiang Mai University and the finding of this study will be further used as a guideline to improve the service of online database usage at the Central Library and also at other libraries throughout Thailand.

## **6. Definition of the terms**

In order to provide better understanding, it is necessary to discuss definitions of some essential terms in this paper.

1) **Undergraduate CMU students** refers to students who have enrolled to study in the Bachelor Degree level at Chiang Mai University from the academic year 2003 to 2006.

2) **Online Database** refers to a collection of information which a producer or commercial vendor created by purchasing various papers, articles, reports, news, documentaries and other formats of information. This information is then synthesized and categorized into certain subjects available on network. Users can access to see this information by connecting through the Internet.

3) **Online Database Service** refers to the service of online referencedatabases provided at the Central Library, Chiang Mai University, during the second semester of the academic year 2004.

4) **Multidisciplinary databases** refer to databases from which various disciplines of contents are stored and categorized into different fields of study. In this study, multidisciplinary databases include *Academic Research Premier*, *Annual Reviews*, *Blackwell Synergy*, *H.W. Wilson*, *ProQuest Digital Dissertations*, *ScienceDirect*, *Taylor & Francis*, *Thomson Gale Testing & Education Reference Center*, and *Thai Theses Online*.

5) **Subject-specific databases** refer to databases which contain in-depth contents of a specific field of study. In this study, subject-specific databases include *ACM Digital Library*, *ACS Publications*, *AGRICOLA*, *AIP/APS*, *ASCE E-journals* (*American Society of Civil Engineers*), *ASME E-journals* (*American Society of Mechanical Engineers*), *Bentham Science E-journal*, *CAB Abstracts*, *Cambridge Journals Online*, *Classical Music Library*, *EI Compendex*, *Emerald Intelligence & Fulltext*, *IEEE/IEE Electronic Library (IEL)*, *Ingenta*, *LexisNexis*, *Matichon e-Library*, *PEP E-Journals* (*Professional Engineering Publishing*), *Project MUSE*, *SciFinder Scholar*, *Springer LINK*, and *Web of Science*.