

**Assessing User Expectations of Library Services in Autonomous Universities
in Southern Thailand**

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Abstract

This article aims to study user expectations regarding autonomous university library services in southern provinces in Thailand. A quantitative research design was employed in the study, along with a questionnaire as a tool to collect the data. The sample group consisted of undergraduate students and faculty members from Prince of Songkla University, Thaksin University, and Walailak University. The participants were classified into two groups: humanities and social sciences, and science. The sample size was determined in equal proportions for those two groups. There were a total of 483 participants. Descriptive statistics used in data analysis included percentages, means, and standard deviations.

The findings reveal that overall user expectations are at a high level. Participants expressed the highest expectations for systems and information technology, followed by service quality and facilities, while information resources received the lowest relative rating. These results serve as a strategic framework for library administrators to enhance service models in alignment with user needs, ensuring libraries effectively support their institutional missions.

Keywords: User expectations regarding, Library services, University libraries, Library users, Autonomous university

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Introduction

University libraries have an important mission to promote and support the main missions of their parent institutions in teaching, research, academic services, and the preservation of arts and culture. Therefore, autonomous university libraries in the southern provinces also have an important mission to do so. In addition to these roles, university libraries still place importance on promoting continuous and lifelong self-learning (Ministry of University Affairs, 2001), which corresponds to a vision of Khunying Long Learning Resource Center Atthakrawee Sunthon Prince of Songkla University (Kaosaiyaporn, 2022) that aims to support lifelong learning and international service under sustainable development for all. Further, Thaksin University Library (Pinto, 2023) has focused on its mission of strengthening cooperation to create a learning society and utilizing shared resources in a worthwhile manner. Library and Educational Media Center Walailak University (Nuntapichai, 2023) also focuses on being a well-prepared learning resource that can respond and create value for learning in the 21st century, which is in line with the Standards for Libraries in Higher Education by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). The objectives are to set guidelines and maintain the role of libraries in higher education institutions to participate in teaching and achieving the parent institution's mission. The standards require libraries to focus on providing services for users to access and use information effectively for academic success and lifelong learning. All forms of information can be discovered through the use of technology, and technological infrastructure must be advanced and up-to-date. Libraries should prepare adequate information resources in terms of quality, depth, and diversity in content and format, and being up to date also should give importance to service areas: physical and virtual. Lastly, libraries should have talented and quality personnel that ensure excellence (ACRL, 2018).

Lewis, former dean of the IUPUI University Library (2007), said that libraries create knowledge for communities and organizations. There were 5 strategies for maintaining libraries: 1) changing from storing printed media to storing in electronic formats, and 2) stopping the use of printed media. Printed materials should be managed differently, 3) redesigning the library as a learning resource area in the university, 4) reorganizing the library: tools, resources, and expertise, 5) shifting from purchasing content to having more open access content (Lewis, 2007).

From the importance that libraries are information resources where they can help students learn continuously on their own. This is in line with the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan B.E. 2555–2559, which has set a strategy for developing people into a society of sustainable lifelong

learning, creating continuous learning opportunities with access to a variety of learning resources and knowledge. Further, the plan emphasized creating a social trend that learning is everyone's duty, promoting collaborative learning among people of different ages, promoting alternative education that is consistent with the needs of students, focusing on student development so that students can learn on their own, and more importantly, providing support on the creation of a learning society and lifelong learning (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2011).

A writing piece, *Constructing Learning Space*, gave an interesting perspective that learning can happen anywhere and anytime: in a restaurant, coffee shop, park, bookstore, or educational institution. Therefore, it is necessary to design learning spaces to encourage learners to learn to their full potential. As the evolution of the curriculum progresses, the learning environment, especially the physical space, is designed according to the characteristics of the traditional curriculum. This might result in opposite directions. Teachers want students to practice learning skills independently, but the classroom is designed in terms of space for lecturing. Once seated, students were forced to face teachers.

Moreover, study desks and chairs do not allow for flexible layouts. So, the important point is that the learning space should be arranged in accordance with the characteristics of that curriculum, as it should be organized in both the physical and virtual spaces with the participation of stakeholders, especially students (Soorapanth, 2015). Therefore, library services are organized to support learning and should focus on providing proactive services and organizing learning spaces for modern learners (Inlek, 2017).

For providing new services in libraries, it was found that university libraries have to change space and services into four types of areas for learning: (1) learning space, (2) inspirational space, (3) meeting space, and (4) expression space to facilitate users (Kaewurai & Chaimin, 2019).

From the study of Chaiwong and Moonmark (2018), it was found that library users had the greatest needs for books, one-stop service, excellent staff who are enthusiastic in providing suggestions, high-speed wireless internet, and effective P.R. channels through Facebook, Line, and Instagram. This can be confirmed from the results of a study by Teamkaew (2018). It was found that users had the highest level of demand for information resources and electronic databases to cover the teaching curriculum and be consistent with the needs of users. As for the study results of Boujanaut (2021), it was found that library users had a high level of demand for reading space and parking space, excellent staff in communication and assistance, and textbooks, research, thesis, and online databases. As for the areas that reflect a moderate level of demand, extending library service hours, providing more individual/group research

rooms, and promoting the services on Facebook, websites, and message boards were needed. The work of Chaiwong and Moonmark (2018) mentioned that users experienced high levels of problems in using library services in every aspect, especially assisting with information retrieval, loud noise, a small number of computers, old, damaged, and insufficient books, and staff who were incapable of helping or giving advice and showed unwillingness to serve. In the writings of Sinnoi (2018), it was found that the problem that arose from library users was that they did not know where to start. They did not know what services the library offers or how to use search programs. As for problems from the library, it was that information resources did not meet needs. Therefore, the problem of information resources that do not match users' needs is a problem that the library must urgently resolve.

Library services must emphasize the experience and needs of service users. It is essential to study the needs or expectations of library users regarding information resources, services, information professionals, systems and information technology, service areas, and facilities to improve university library services so that autonomous university libraries in the southern provinces will continue to achieve their goals according to the main mission of the host institutions.

A primary limitation of existing research is its predominant focus on descriptive satisfaction surveys, which lack the in-depth analysis needed to link post-COVID-19 user expectations with the management policies of autonomous university libraries. This connection is essential for establishing service models that effectively address the needs of lifelong learning.

Objectives

This article aims to study users' expectations regarding library services at autonomous universities in the southern provinces of Thailand.

Scope of study

This study studies libraries of autonomous higher education institutions in the southern provinces, including (1) Khunying Long Learning Resource Center Atthakrawee Sunthon Prince of Songkla University (2) Thaksin University Library Office Songkhla Campus and (3) Educational Library and Media Center Walailak University The contents studied include (1) expectations in information resources, (2) service provision, (3) information professionals, (4) information systems and technology, (5) service

areas, and (6) facilities. The data was analyzed according to the ACRL (2018) framework, including related research and documents.

Method

This study employed a quantitative research design, and the details are as follows.

1. Population and samples

1.1 Population in the study were

1) The total population of undergraduate students enrolled in the first semester of the 2022 academic year was 53,882. This total includes 29,971 students from Prince of Songkla University, 14,411 from Thaksin University, and 9,500 from Walailak University. (Office of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2023).

2) The total population of 2,576 faculty members from autonomous universities in Southern Thailand is distributed as follows: 1,343 from Prince of Songkla University, 516 from Thaksin University, and 717 from Walailak University. (Office of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2022).

1.2 **The sample groups** in the study were undergraduate students and faculty members affiliated with autonomous universities in the southern provinces. The sample was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970), with a sample size of at least 381 participants. Therefore, a total sample size of 600 participants was equally distributed among the three universities, with 200 respondents from each institution. Following a quota sampling approach, the participants at each university were further classified into four distinct subgroups of 50 individuals each: (1) undergraduate students in Humanities and Social Sciences, (2) undergraduate students in Sciences, (3) faculty members in Humanities and Social Sciences, and (4) faculty members in Sciences.

2. Research instruments. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire regarding the respondents' personal information and user expectations regarding the service of autonomous university libraries in southern provinces in Thailand.

3. Procedures for creating a questionnaire are as follows:

1) The findings from the study on the current state of library service provision in autonomous universities in the southern provinces served as a framework for developing a questionnaire on users' expectations regarding library services in autonomous universities in southern Thailand.

2) Analyze and synthesize relevant content to develop a questionnaire.

3) Develop a questionnaire regarding 6 areas of expectation, including (1) information resources, (2) service, (3) information professionals, (4) information systems and technology, (5) service areas, and (6) facilities. The questionnaire was a 5-level estimation scale.

4) The developed questionnaire was evaluated by three experts with at least 5 years of experience in university library services or in university library administration and management. They were asked to provide recommendations and suggestions for improving and revising the questionnaire. The Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) was used for this evaluation during 1–13 November 2022, and the resulting IOC value was 0.95.

5) The reliability of the questionnaire was tested with 30 sets of undergraduate students and professors who were not in the sample group. This was completed between 15 and 16 November 2022, and then the tests were analyzed to find the confidence value by using the alpha coefficient of Cronbach (1990), and the value was 0.984. The confidence value was between 0 and 1, which indicated that this questionnaire had a high confidence value.

6) Revise the questionnaire to collect data from the sample group of undergraduate students and professors affiliated with autonomous universities in the southern provinces.

4. Data Collection. The questionnaire was distributed to students and faculty members in each group according to the number specified in the sample selection process. The researchers collected 600 sets. This process was completed between November 18, 2022, and February 24, 2023. Four hundred eighty-three sets of complete questionnaires were returned, which was 80.50 percent of all questionnaires.

5. Data analysis. Percentage had been employed in analyzing the data of personal information. Other descriptive statistics, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data of expectations. The data were presented in the form of a table along with the descriptions. The agreement scoring scale of the questionnaire is as follows (Srisa-ard, 2010):

The highest level of expectation is assigned to a 5-point scale.

A high level of expectation is assigned to a 4-point scale.

A moderate level of expectation is assigned to a 3-point scale.

A low level of expectation is assigned to a 2-point scale.

The lowest level of expectation is assigned to a 1-point scale.

Then, the average of the questionnaire will be interpreted as the mean as follows:

An average of 4.51 - 5.00 means having the highest level of expectation.

An average of 3.51 - 4.50 means having a high level of expectation.

An average of 2.51 - 3.50 means having a moderate level of expectation.

An average of 1.51 - 2.50 means having a low level of expectation.

An average of 1.00 - 1.50 means having the lowest level of expectation.

Results

Results of analysis of personal information consist of gender, status, group, affiliated university, library in use, and conditions of service. The data was analyzed using percentages, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number and percentage of respondents by personal information

Personal information of respondents	Number	Percentage
1. Gender		
Male	135	28.00
Female	348	72.00
Total	483	100.00
2. Status		
Faculty member	183	37.90
Student	300	62.10
Total	483	100.00
3. Groups		
Humanities and Social Sciences	228	47.20
Sciences	255	52.80
Total	483	100.00
4. Affiliated universities		
Prince of Songkla University	167	34.60
Thaksin University	181	37.40
Walailak University	135	28.00
Total	483	100.00
5. Library in use		
Libraries affiliated with Prince of Songkla University	164	34.00
Library affiliated with Thaksin University	176	36.40
Library under Walailak University	136	28.20

Personal information of respondents	Number	Percentage
Other university libraries in Thailand	1	0.20
Other university libraries abroad	1	0.20
Libraries affiliated with Prince of Songkla University and Thaksin University	3	0.60
Libraries affiliated with Prince of Songkla University and Walailak University.	1	0.20
Libraries affiliated with Prince of Songkla University and other university libraries.	1	0.20
Total	483	100.00
6. Conditions of service use		
Use services within the library (physical)	230	47.60
Use services through the library network (online)	33	6.90
Use physical and online services	220	45.50
Total	483	100.00

From Table 1, it was found that there were 348 females (72.00 %), 135 males (28.00 %), 300 students (62.10 %) and 183 faculty members (37.90 %), 255 people from the science group (52.80 %) 228 people were from humanities and social sciences group (47.20 %), 181 people belonged to Thaksin University (37.40 %), 167 people were from Prince of Songkla University (4.60 %), 135 people were from Walailak University (28.00 %). Most of the libraries 176 people went to were libraries affiliated with Thaksin University (36.40 %), followed by libraries affiliated with Prince of Songkla University, 164 people (34.00 %), and library services under Walailak University, 136 people (28.20 %). In terms of conditions of services, the majority, 230 people, used services within the library (47.60 %), followed by 220 people using physical and online services (45.50 %), and 33 people using services through the library network (6.90 %), respectively.

The results in user expectations of the service of autonomous university libraries in southern provinces in Thailand are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of opinions of the users regarding their expectations of services.

User expectations regarding library services	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpret results
Information resources	4.25	0.849	High
Service provision	4.40	0.765	High
Information professional	4.37	0.747	High
Systems and information technology	4.54	0.648	The highest
Service area	4.37	0.787	High
Facilities	4.38	0.817	High
Total	4.39	0.768	High

From Table 2, it was found that the overall expectation was at a high level (average 4.39). The expectation with the highest average level was the systems and information technology of 4.54. Next is the expectations in service providing, which showed a high average level of 4.40, and the expectations for facilities were at 4.38, respectively. The lowest average level was the expectations regarding information resources at 4.25.

The results of the analysis of users' opinions of autonomous university libraries in the southern provinces regarding their expectations in using library services are represented the top three expectations in Table 3 as follows.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of opinions of users of autonomous university libraries in the southern provinces regarding their expectations in using the service.

User expectations regarding library services	Expectation level		
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpret results
1. Information Resources			
1.1 Quality information resources with up-to-date content	4.57	0.661	The highest
1.2 Information resources that are in-depth and contain specialized content	4.48	0.715	High
1.3 Various channels are easily accessed and convenient for recommending information resources upon request.	4.40	0.762	High
Average information resources	4.25	0.849	High

User expectations regarding library services	Expectation level		
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpret results
2. Service			
2.1 Services that are easily accessible anywhere and anytime, and convenient.	4.62	0.635	The highest
2.2 Services that are flexible and respond quickly to users	4.53	0.667	The highest
2.3 One-stop service	4.39	0.766	High
Average service provision	4.40	0.765	High
3. Information professionals			
3.1 Possess professional ethics	4.56	0.677	The highest
3.2 Possess good interpersonal and communication skills.	4.55	0.696	The highest
3.3 Possess a service-oriented mindset and a commitment to high-quality service	4.53	0.694	The highest
Information professional average	4.37	0.747	High
4. Systems and information technology			
4.1 Hardware infrastructure, software, and modern network are stable and secure.	4.57	0.631	The highest
4.2 The library website aggregate external information resources for open access service.	4.55	0.653	The highest
4.3 The library website provides various services. The page is complete, clear, and easy to use.	4.53	0.660	The highest
Information systems and technology average	4.54	0.648	The highest
5. Service area			
5.1 24-hour service area	4.52	0.768	The highest
5.2 Meeting Spaces	4.49	0.741	The highest
5.3 Learning Spaces	4.49	0.664	High
Average service area	4.37	0.787	High
6. Facilities			
6.1 Wi-Fi that is stable and covers all library service areas	4.69	0.598	The highest
6.2 booking services: research rooms, online meeting rooms, or working space	4.55	0.723	The highest
6.3 Printing service: printers and scanners	4.47	0.787	High
Average of facilities	4.38	0.817	High
Total	4.39	0.768	High

From Table 3, the results of expectations regarding service providing revealed that

1. Information resources. Overall expectations were at a high average level (4.25). Participants expected to have quality information resources and up-to-date content (4.57), followed by in-depth and specific content (4.48) and to have a variety of channels that are easily accessible and convenient for recommending information resources upon request (4.40), respectively.

2. Service providing. Overall expectations were at a high average level (4.40). Participants expected services that are easily accessible anywhere, anytime, and convenient (4.62). Next, they expected flexible service, quick response to users (4.53), and a one-stop service (4.39).

3. Information professionals. Overall expectations were average (4.37). Participants expected information professionals to have professional ethics (4.56). Next, information professionals are expected to have good interpersonal and communication skills (4.55), possess a service-oriented mindset, and a commitment to high-quality service (4.53), respectively.

4. Systems and information technology. Overall expectations were at a high average level (4.54). Participants expected hardware infrastructure, software, and networks to be modern, stable, and secure (4.57). Next, they expected the library website to aggregate external information resource services for open access (4.55). They expected the library website to provide various services in a complete, clear, and easy-to-use format (4.53).

5. Service areas. Overall expectations were at a high average level (4.37). Participants expected a 24-hour service area (4.52). Next, they expected meeting spaces and learning spaces (4.49).

6. Facilities. Overall expectations were at a high average level (4.38). Participants expected stable Wi-Fi covering all library service areas (4.69). Next, they expected a service for booking research rooms, working rooms, or meeting rooms via the online system (4.55), and they expected the service of a printer area for printing and scanning (4.47).

Table 4. Comparison of mean differences in user expectations regarding library services, classified by status.

User expectations regarding library services	Status	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	p
Information resources	Faculty member	4.16	0.581	-2.21 ^a	.027
	Student	4.28	0.526		
Service provision	Faculty member	4.44	0.640	1.09	.276
	Student	4.38	0.552		
Information professional	Faculty member	4.38	0.546	0.12	.902
	Student	4.37	0.536		
Systems and information technology	Faculty member	4.52	0.633	-0.96 ^a	.336
	Student	4.57	0.522		
Service area	Faculty member	4.21	0.696	-5.16 ^a	<.001
	Student	4.48	0.473		
Facilities	Faculty member	4.24	0.614	-4.74 ^a	<.001
	Student	4.47	0.468		
Total	Faculty member	4.33	0.618	0.20	.257
	Student	4.43	0.512		

^a Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

From Table 4, classified by status, the overall expectation levels regarding library services between Faculty members and Students showed no statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level. When considering individual aspects, it was found that Service Area and Facilities showed statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level. In contrast, there were no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between Faculty members and Students regarding Information Resources, Service Provision, Information Professional, and Systems and Information Technology.

Table 5. Comparison of mean differences in user expectations regarding library services, classified by groups.

User expectations regarding library services	Group	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	p
Information resources	Humanities and Social Sciences	4.24	0.559	0.29	.771
	Sciences	4.23	0.542		
Service provision	Humanities and Social Sciences	4.43	0.601	0.92	.355
	Sciences	4.38	0.575		
Information professional	Humanities and Social Sciences	4.39	0.553	0.48	.626
	Sciences	4.36	0.527		
Systems and information technology	Humanities and Social Sciences	4.60	0.518	1.86 ^a	.063
	Sciences	4.50	0.603		
Service area	Humanities and Social Sciences	4.38	0.593	-0.05	.957
	Sciences	4.38	0.575		
Facilities	Humanities and Social Sciences	4.41	0.514	1.10	.269
	Sciences	4.36	0.562		
Total	Humanities and Social Sciences	4.41	0.556	0.46	.506
	Sciences	4.37	0.564		

^a Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

From Table 6, classified by group, the overall expectation levels regarding library services between Humanities and Social Sciences and Sciences showed no statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level. Furthermore, when considering individual aspects—namely Information Resources, Service Provision, Information Professional, Systems and Information Technology, Service Area, and Facilities—there were no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between Humanities and Social Sciences and Sciences.

Discussion

The university library services will be successful, high quality, or excellent depending on services that are consistent with the expectations of library users as follows:

1. Expectations regarding information systems and technology. The study's results found that hardware infrastructure, software, and networks were expected to be modern, stable, and secure. Further, the library website should aggregate external open-access information resources and provide comprehensive, clear, and user-friendly services. This aligns with the findings of Youngsukying (2021), who stated that libraries should provide free or open access to diverse information resources to support the needs and education of users in the digital age—particularly those for whom mobile devices are integral to their daily lives and who remain constantly online. These expectations not only impact the efficiency and quality of library services but also reflect the continuous development and enhancement of information systems to better meet user needs in the digital era.

2. Expectations regarding service. It was found that participants expected services that are easily accessible and convenient anytime and anywhere. Additionally, a service that is flexible and responds quickly to users and a one-stop service is expected from the participants. In contrast, a study by Sukhapan (2026) found that users desired an extension of library operating hours and requested 24-hour services. Such demands indicate that current library hours do not yet align with user expectations. Therefore, the library should consider guidelines for service development to meet these expectations and effectively support diverse usage needs.

3. Expectations regarding facilities. The study results found that participants expected stable Wi-Fi coverage across all library service areas, online reservation systems for research rooms, as well as the availability of printers for scanning and printing documents. This is consistent with the study results of Sukin (2019), whose findings indicated that libraries provide services for borrowing modern technological equipment, alongside printing, scanning, and photocopying services. Meanwhile, the study results from the National Library of Thailand (2023) found that users required computers for searching, microfilm readers, and internet access. In this regard, the library—as a service provider—should focus on developing and improving services to align with the diverse expectations and needs of users, thereby enhancing the overall service experience

4. Expectations regarding information professionals. The results of the study found that information professionals are expected to have professional ethics, good interpersonal and communication skills, a

service-oriented mindset, and a commitment to high-quality service. This aligns with Napim (2021), who emphasized the need for friendly personnel providing reliable professional expertise. It is also consistent with Sukhapan (2026), who found that users desire staff who demonstrate enthusiasm, readiness, and trustworthy professional competence. These findings reflect the library's commitment to the continuous skill and competency development of information professionals.

5. Expectations regarding Service area. The results of the study found that participants expected to have a 24-hour service area, meeting spaces, and learning spaces. This is consistent with the research of Sukhapan (2026), which found a demand for 24-hour services and group study rooms, along with the organization of learning spaces to align with the needs and behaviors of 21st-century users. This follows the perspective of Thorhauge (2015), who stated that libraries must provide spaces for learning, inspiration, meeting, and expression.

6. Expectations regarding Information resources. The results of the study found that participants expected quality information resources with up-to-date content, information resources that are deep and specialized, and information resources that are available through a variety of channels. These resources should be easily accessible and convenient for recommending information resources upon request. This aligns with the research by the National Library of Thailand (2023), which found that users require modern and comprehensive information resources across all categories. Notably, expectations regarding information resources were ranked last; this could be attributed to the information behaviors of users in the post-COVID-19 era, who increasingly prioritize accessing external information sources over those curated and provided by the library. Consequently, for the library to remain a vital learning hub that helps elevate society into a lifelong learning society, it must provide diverse channels—such as websites, applications, and online services—to ensure that all user groups can access information effectively.

Conclusions

This study identifies six key conceptual expectations of library users. 1. Expectations regarding information systems and technology. The study's results found that hardware infrastructure, software, and networks were expected to be modern, stable, and safe. 2. It was found that participants expected services that are easily accessible and convenient anytime and anywhere. 3. The study results found that participants expected stable Wi-Fi that covers all library service areas. 4. The results of the study found that information professionals are expected to have professional ethics. 5. The results of the study found that participants

expected to have a 24-hour service area. 6. The results of the study found that participants expected quality information resources with up-to-date content.

Suggestions

1. Strategic Service Alignment. Given that university libraries are mandated to support the core missions of their parent institutions—specifically in teaching, research, and academic services—administrators should prioritize service strategies that directly address user demands. Emphasis should be placed on fulfilling expectations regarding systems and information technology, service provision, and facilities, as these have become critical components for ensuring seamless access to information and library services.

2. Contextual Space Development. Autonomous university libraries in the southern provinces can utilize these findings as a framework to enhance services within their specific contexts, particularly by integrating physical and virtual service areas. To better accommodate modern users, libraries should design multi-functional spaces based on the needs for learning, inspiration, meeting, and expression, while also considering the implementation of 24-hour service areas.

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