

The 'Red Spot' Collection Of The Main Library, Universiti Malaya

by
Andrew Lee*

Abstract:- *Koleksi Bertanda Merah (KBM) Perpustakaan Besar Universiti Malaya terletak di tingkat dua bangunan Institut Pengajian Tinggi. Koleksi ini menyimpan bahan-bahan yang telah disyorkan oleh pensyarah-pensyarah bagi kursus mereka. Permintaan untuk bahan-bahan ini adalah tinggi, oleh itu peraturan-peraturan dikenakan yang menghadkan masa pinjaman dan memberikan peluang kepada semua pelajar dan pensyarah menggunakan bahan KBM. Kad Bertanda Merah mestilah digunakan untuk meminjam bahan dari KBM dan pelajar-pelajar dinasihatkan mengikut peraturan KBM supaya perkhidmatan pinjaman dapat berjalan lancar serta berjumpa Pustakawan Sirkulasi jika menghadapi masalah semasa menggunakan KBM.*

Introduction

A lecturer will have his own list of reference materials, some of which would be recommended as basic or compulsory reading texts. Students are usually given the reading lists or the lecturer himself mentions these references during his lectures. Students can either purchase their own copy or borrow them from the library. Most students do not have sufficient financial means to purchase every item on the list as the cost of academic books is usually high. They would then have to depend on the university library to meet their needs.

Hence, most college and university libraries have set up a reserve book collection to enable students to have access to relevant materials. In the University of Malaya Main Library, the reserve book collection is called 'Koleksi Bertanda Merah' or in English the 'Red Spot Collection' (RSC)¹. It is so named as the materials in this collection are identified by a red coloured spot affixed to the spine or cover of each item.

The Circulation Division administers the RSC and a library officer is in charge of the collection. A budget is allocated to purchase Red Spot materials. However, selection and acquisition policies and financial consideration would limit the number of copies that can be bought. In such a case therefore, the problem of excessive demand over a limited body of materials will always exist, but the library is able to alleviate this situation to a certain degree. The materials in RSC are kept as a closed reserve collection where browsing is disallowed. A user has to request for the item at the Red Spot loan counter and a Red Spot card must be used to borrow it. A limited borrowing period is also imposed so that no one has monopoly over a Red Spot item. Sufficient staff and service counters are provided to cope with the large volume of borrowing. These measures are essential to ensure that everyone gets a chance to use Red Spot materials.

Different courses are offered yearly by lecturers. Hence, Red Spot materials are kept on a temporary

* Library officer, Circulation Division.

¹ Throughout this article, and for convenience, the English abbreviation 'RSC' is used to mean 'Red Spot' Collection.

basis, usually the duration of the course. The non-relevant materials are removed periodically and returned to the open shelf collection.

Location of RSC

In 1977, the RSC was transferred from the Main Library to the first floor of the Institute of Higher Learning building where the Law Library and the Postgraduate Library are also housed. The transfer is not meant to decentralize the library collection per se or inconvenience the students. It was more for practical reasons in view of the problems encountered in the Main Library.

Prior to 1977, the RSC was situated where the present Bahagian Koleksi Kebangsaan (National Collection Division) is situated. The mezzanine floor structure divided the RSC into two levels, one serving the Arts students and the other the Science students. As the collection expanded and student population increased progressively over the years, it was found that the separate arrangement could not service the demands of the students efficiently and effectively. A survey conducted revealed that there was overcrowding and heavy demand at only the Arts service counter giving rise to queueing and long waiting period to borrow a Red Spot item.² Students after obtaining a Red Spot item also found it difficult to get a seat in the library.

When a new library building was erected, it was felt that the shift of the RSC to the new building would ease the problem of overcrowding and lack of reading space prevalent in the Main Library.³ The new place could house both the arts and science materials together making retrieval of Red Spot materials easier. Moreover, the staff could co-operate and co-ordinate their work efficiently during peak borrowing at any service counter. There is also sufficient seating space.

The Administration of the RSC

Though the RSC is physically detached from the Main Library, the Circulation Division administers the

collection closely. A professional staff is responsible for the overall collection and a supervisor is stationed in the RSC to supervise staff duties and the premises. Two groups of eight staff each share the morning and night shifts on a rotation basis. Staff duties are allotted accordingly and each staff is responsible for keeping daily loan records at the assigned counter. There are three service counters that loan out materials according to the class numbers. The loan records are checked regularly by the Circulation librarian. Occasional spot checks and regular meetings with the supervisor ensure that the RSC functions effectively and smoothly. Basic enquiries and minor problems are handled by the staff and supervisor, but should any major problem arise, the Library Officer in-charge is contacted by telephone or the user is requested to see him personally.

The opening hours in the RSC correspond to that of the Main Library.⁴ The opening and closing hours notice is displayed at the entrance of the RSC hall.

Types of Materials in the RSC

The RSC has 9,943 titles with a total volume of 25,379 items. Monographs form the major portion of the collection with a total of 18,106 volumes. There are also 2,253 volumes of photocopy articles, the rest being journals and academic exercises.

Most departments request some materials of their disciplines to be placed in the RSC. However, the majority of the requests are from the Economics, Arts and Social Science departments, which have a higher enrolment figure and offer more courses.

The Red Spot budget is handled by the Acquisition Division. In 1983, the allocation was \$24,813.00 but this year it has been reduced to \$11,000.00 due to an overall drastic cut to the budget allocation for the library. This substantial reduction would mean more stringent selection and acquisition policies for Red Spot materials by lecturers and the library respectively.

The large collection serves the needs of 9,828 students. The circulation figure averages 20,000 loans per month during the academic sessions.⁵ The circu-

² See, Minutes 226 of Library Committee Meeting of 29.7.1969 and Appendix C, "Preliminary report on a survey of the Red Spot book service".

³ See, Minutes 462 of Library Committee Meeting of 14.12.1976 and Appendix VI, "Expansion of library services into the Postgraduate Building Complex.

⁴ The library hours for the RSC and the other libraries are given on the reverse of the cover of each *Kekal Abadi* issue.

⁵ The circulation figure includes single checkouts, renewals and overnight loans.

lation figure for the 1983/84 academic year totalled 201,352 loans, thus indicating its popularity with the students. Arts students borrowed twice as many times as Science students.

The various Red Spot materials are shelved according to the call number to facilitate retrieval.

Some of the useful resource materials available in the RSC are government annual reports and statistics, the Malaysia Five Year Plan reports, Economic Reports and local journals. Among the frequently borrowed materials are usually reference materials for first year courses particularly photocopy articles and basic textbooks. The previous years examination question papers of the university are also well utilized.

Certain local journals like Dewan Masyarakat and Dewan Bahasa and those materials related to local studies are often kept in the RSC as local studies are usually compulsory courses offered in most departments. These materials are heavily used and experience has shown that placing such materials in the RSC preserve them from pilferage, which often occur if they are left on the open shelves. Some literature materials are also kept in the RSC for similar reasons.

Copies of academic exercises from the various faculties are also housed in the RSC. These exercises are placed as 'closed stacks' materials and, cannot be borrowed overnight or photocopied for fear of copyright infringement.

Some materials have been placed in the RSC at the request of the Off-Campus Department of University of Science Malaysia for their 'Off-Campus' courses. Those 'Off-Campus' students residing in the Federal Territory, the states of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and West Pahang are allowed to register as library members and make use of the RSC.

As mentioned earlier, most materials in the RSC are not permanent. The total volume changes from year to year. Various titles are removed periodically at the request of lecturers or through a weeding exercise carried out biennially. In the 1982 weeding exercise, old editions, materials not used since 1980, and infrequently borrowed multiple copies were removed. Over 2,000 selected materials were removed and returned to the open shelf collection. Academic exercises, law materials, journals and personal copies of lecturers were not affected. Materials used in compulsory courses and frequently used ones are retained for longer periods or on a more 'permanent' basis or for a period specified by the teaching staff. Weeding thus helps to ensure that only relevant

and necessary materials are kept and the RSC maintain a stabilized and manageable collection.

How a Red Spot Request is Processed

A few months before a new academic session begins, the library reminds lecturers to submit their requests early. This is important because sufficient time must be given to the library to order materials not available and process those available in the library. Requests are also received throughout the year. In the 1983/84 session, 1,345 Red Spot items were processed.

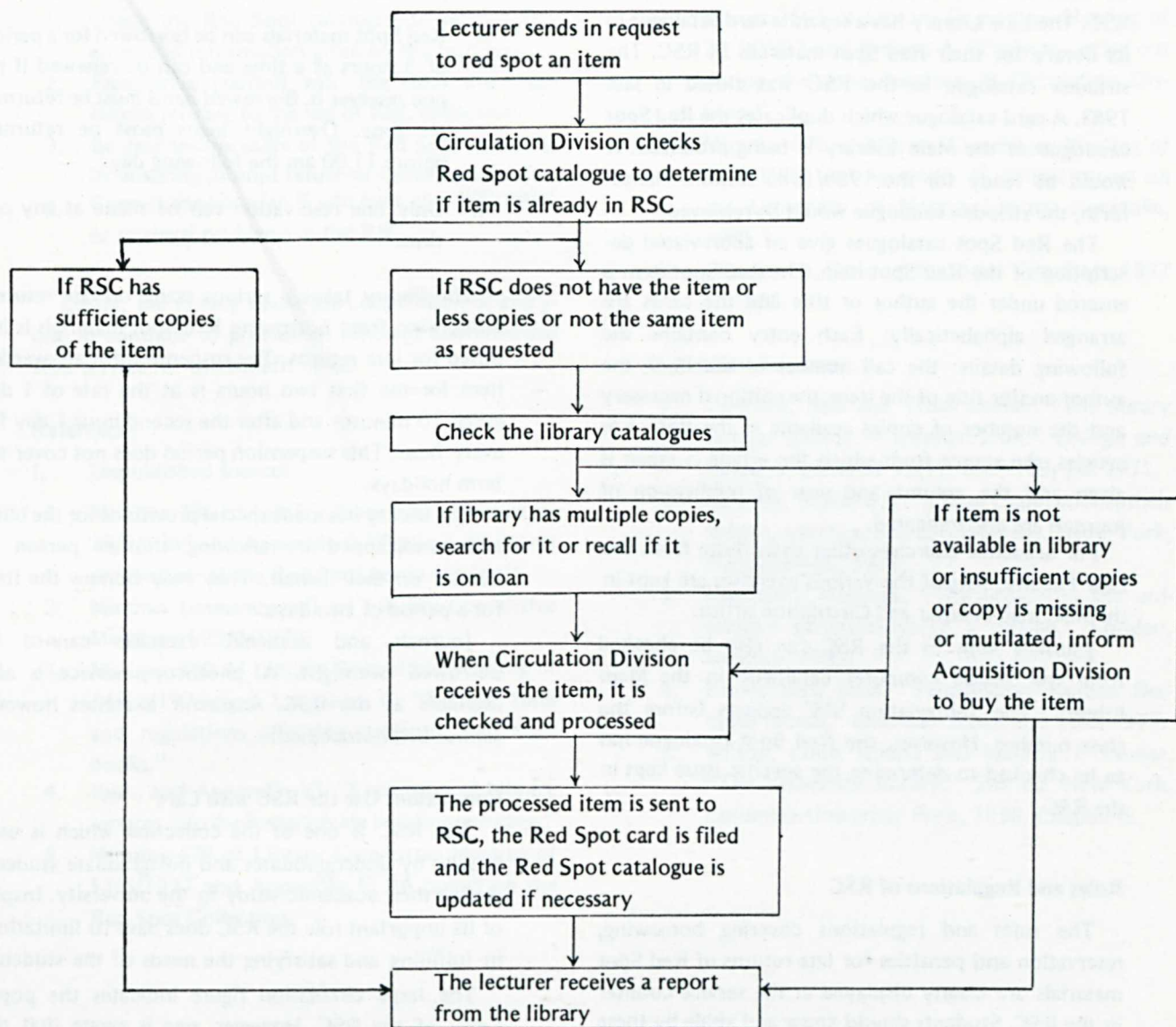
For monographs, at least a copy per title is placed in the RSC when requested. If multiple copies are requested by the lecturer, the library adopts a general rule of placing 1 copy for every 30 students enrolled for a course. This ratio would vary depending on other factors such as, the cost of the item, the funds available, the currency of the course and the acquisition policies of the library. For journal articles and extract from books, the library would photocopy multiple copies of the article instead of placing the whole book or journal in the RSC.

The various steps involved in processing a Red Spot request are delineated in Figure 1. There would be no delay if the requested item is already in the RSC. However, if the requested title is for an edition later than the one existing in the RSC, the library would have to replace it with the latest edition available. Orders for requested titles would have to be made, if they are unavailable in the library stock. The duration involved in these procedures can range between a week to over a month. Delays are thus unavoidable at times.

Other problems encountered are late requests, insufficient or vague details on the requests slips, items out on loan and the required material missing, misplaced, deliberately hidden or mutilated or torn from books and journals. These problems can be reduced and delays minimized if there is co-operation and co-ordination with the lecturers. Lecturers need to inform the library early and provide accurate details in their requests and users need to be more conscientious and responsible.

If an item is ordered by the Acquisition Division, the library sends a report to the lecturer. As with Circulation Division, the Acquisition Division also gives top priority to Red Spot requests. Photocopied articles are requested through inter-library loan.

Figure 1: Processing A Red Spot Request



On receipt of an item, it is catalogued immediately. Photocopied articles are bound before they are catalogued, processed and sent to RSC. A report is sent to the lecturer and it serves as a reference when he makes future requests.

When placing any title in the RSC, the library would also place at least a copy or multiple copies of the same title in the open shelf collection. Students who wish to use a Red Spot item for a longer period can borrow the additional copy from the open shelf through the regular loan service. Moreover, other

readers can also have access to these materials which may be useful to them.

The Catalogues for the RSC.

Students should understand and familiarize themselves on how to use the card catalogue and Computer Output Microfiche (COM) catalogue⁶ to locate materials and fully utilise the resources available in the Main Library as a whole and the RSC in particular.

⁶ To understand the COM catalogue see, Selvaratnam, M. "Entri Katalog COM: setengah ciri baru." *Kekal Abadi* 2(1): 11-13, Mac 1983.

The Red Spot card catalogue in the Main Library and the stripdex catalogue in the RSC are catalogues for users to check whether an item is available in the RSC. The Law Library has a separate card catalogue in its library for their Red Spot materials in RSC. The stripdex catalogue in the RSC was closed in late 1983. A card catalogue which duplicates the Red Spot catalogue of the Main Library is being produced. It would be ready for the 1984/1985 session. Henceforth, the stripdex catalogue would be removed.

The Red Spot catalogues give an abbreviated description of the Red Spot item. The Red Spot item is entered under the author or title and the cards are arranged alphabetically. Each entry contains the following details: the call number of the item; the author and/or title of the item; the edition if necessary and the number of copies available in the RSC. For articles, the source from which the article is taken is given and the volume and year of publication of journals are also indicated.

For academic exercises other than those from the Law Faculty, lists of the various exercises are kept in the RSC loan counter and Circulation office.

Journals kept in the RSC can also be checked from the Serials computer catalogue in the Main Library. The abbreviation 'RS' appears before the class number. However, the Red Spot catalogue has to be checked to determine the specific issue kept in the RSC.

Rules and Regulations of RSC

The rules and regulations covering borrowing, reservation and penalties for late returns of Red Spot materials are clearly displayed at the service counter in the RSC. Students should know and abide by these rules to ensure the smooth functioning of services in the RSC. The cardinal rule of silence must be observed. Eating and drinking are also prohibited. Some of the important rules to observe and remember are:

1. A Red Spot card must always be used to borrow Red Spot items. This card is issued when a student registers with the library. Lecturers need to show their staff card to borrow.

2. Loss of the card must be reported to the Circulation Office. No fee is charged but a personal photograph is needed for the replacement.
3. Red Spot materials can be borrowed for a period of 3 hours at a time and can be renewed if no one reserves it. Borrowed items must be returned on time. Overnight loans must be returned before 11.00 am the following day.
4. Only one reservation can be made at any one time.

The library takes a serious stand on late returns. Suspension from borrowing Red Spot materials is imposed for late returns. The suspension for an overdue item for the first two hours is at the rate of 1 day every 10 minutes and after the second hour 1 day for every hour. This suspension period does not cover the term holidays.

The library has made special provisions for the blind and handicapped by allowing another person to borrow on their behalf. They may borrow the item for a period of two days.

Journals and academic exercises cannot be borrowed overnight. A photocopy service is also available at the RSC. Academic exercises however cannot be photocopied.

Conclusion: Use the RSC with Care

The RSC is one of the collection which is used heavily by undergraduates and postgraduate students during their academic study in the university. In spite of its important role the RSC does have its limitations in fulfilling and satisfying the needs of the students.

The large circulation figure indicates the popularity of the RSC. However, one is aware that this large figure does not necessarily mean that every Red Spot material is used.⁷ A detailed survey of types of materials borrowed and the frequency of loans/renewals per item would be a better gauge of the extent the collection is being utilized and the effectiveness of RSC in meeting students' needs. This study would also help lecturers and the library in their selection and acquisition policies of Red Spot materials.

⁷ In a study done on the reserve book collection at the University of Nebraska, it was revealed that reading list with less than 20 titles, 42% of the titles were never circulated and the % of titles never used rises for course list of over 20 titles. Carmack, Bob and Trudi Loeber. "The library reserve system — another look." *College and Research Libraries* 32(1): 105, Jan 1971.

Below are some useful guidelines to remember when using the RSC:

1. Check the Red Spot catalogue to verify references and information given by the lecturers.
2. Familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations relating to the use of RSC collection.
3. Be responsible users of the Red Spot materials by ensuring prompt return of loaned materials.
4. Consult the librarian if you have any difficulties or retrieval problems in the RSC.

Lastly, the library needs the cooperation of everyone to continue to provide an efficient and effective RSC service for the benefit of all.

References

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