

# MOBILE LIBRARIES IN SARAWAK

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## INTRODUCTION

The history of mobile libraries in Sarawak dates back to 1980s with the commencement of the Kuching Mobile Library. Since then, more units were added due to increasing demand from the sub-urban and rural communities. The mobile library service was then operated by the Library Division of the Ministry of Environment and Public Health of Sarawak, which performed the function of the Sarawak State Library.

## HOW MANY MOBILE LIBRARIES ARE THERE?

Up to this date, There are 11 mobile libraries operating in the state

1. Kuching Mobile Library
2. Samarahan Mobile Library
3. Sri Aman Mobile Library
4. Sarikei Mobile Library
5. Sibul Mobile Library
6. Miri Mobile Library
7. Mukah Mobile Library
8. Kuching Mobile Multimedia Unit (e-Pustaka Kuching)
9. Lawas Mobile Multimedia Unit (e-Pustaka Lawas)

## TYPES OF MOBILE LIBRARY

It must be noted that the first 7 mobile libraries are still operated and maintained by the Library Division of the Ministry of Environment and Public Health of Sarawak, while the e-Pustaka are currently operated by Pustaka Negeri Sarawak.

The mobile library operated by the Ministry of Environment and Public Health of Sarawak consists of books, which are loaned out to users for a period of 2 weeks. It mainly serves schools in the sub-urban and rural areas. The e-Pustaka on the other hand is equipped with the following basic ICT facilities:

1. a network server
2. an IP-based local area network
3. 8 – 10 units of computers
4. a printer
5. Internet connection
6. electric power generator
7. air conditioning system
8. books and CD-ROM collection worth RM50,000

The main objectives of this service are:

- a. to improve ICT awareness among the rural population;
- b. to provide electronic classroom experience to the rural community;
- c. to promote the use of ICT in teaching and learning at school level;
- d. to assess the impact of ICT applications in the rural areas; and
- e. to narrow the digital divide or gap among the communities in Sarawak.

The training provided in e-Pustaka programme covers:

- i. Introduction to computer.
- ii. Online information resources, which include the Internet and CD-ROM databases.
- iii. Trends and issues in ICT.
- iv. ICT mini projects – such as web page design and publishing.

## IS MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE DECLINING?

Mobile library serves areas where the services of a static library are very marginal. The awareness of the public on the importance of information and knowledge, both in the rural and urban areas, is on the increase and so is the demand or need for library services, both static and mobile. Static libraries can only serve part of the community – those living or residing nearby. Mobile libraries supplement that by delivering services to users beyond the reach of these libraries.

A decline in mobile library service? Not true. On the contrary, as more new libraries are constructed throughout Sarawak, even more requests for mobile library service are received from the public. In fact, there is no indication that mobile library service is going extinct.

## OPERATION COST

The annual operation cost of e-Pustaka Kuching and e-Pustaka Lawas is approximately RM73, 000. Simple breakdown of the cost is as follows:

COST	AMOUNT (RM)
Maintenance and fuel	25, 000
Remuneration	48, 000

## BENEFICIARIES

As of now, the 2 e-Pustaka have serviced 80 service points, mostly primary schools, with an average of 15 visits site. Approximately, 2,600 students and teachers have benefited from them. This year, e-Pustaka Kuching is venturing into community centers to serve the public. Any member of the public where e-Pustaka is delivering its service is eligible to use the service. At school level, the eligibility of students who are to attend e-Pustaka sessions is mainly controlled by the schools concerned. As such, membership system is not applicable here.