Factors Affecting Selection of Information Sources: A Study of Ramkhamhaeng University Regional Campuses Graduate Students

ABSTRACT
Previous studies have found that perceived source accessibility strongly correlates with the frequency of use of information sources and has influenced use of information channels, rather than expected quality or amount of information. Regional students succeed in their studies when they can easily access information through convenient sources. Therefore, the researcher will investigate factors affecting regional students’ selection of information sources to meet their information needs, as well as investigate these regional students’ satisfaction with Ramkhamhaeng University (RU) Regional Library Services and the perceived quality of information retrieved from other information sources. The researcher applies the Principle of Least Effort for this study. This principle governs and predicts the choices of these regional students’ perceived source accessibility, whereas Simon’s Satisficing Theory explains the selection and use of the information retrieved without considering whether the information is optimal.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Based on the Principle of Least Effort and the reviewed literature, a conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 1, with arrows representing causal relationships. In this study, the perceived accessibility represents four aspects (convenience, ease of use, availability, and familiarity) that relate with the frequency of use of information sources.

RESEARCH DESIGN
The researcher will conduct an exploratory research. This research design allows the researcher to utilize a survey method.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL
The multiple regression model (Figure 1) is given by:

\[ \hat{y} = a + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3 X_3 + b_4 X_4 \]

where \( \hat{y} \) is the predicted value of the dependent variable (called y-hat), \( a \) is the constant, \( b_1, b_2, b_3, \) and \( b_4 \) are the regression coefficients, and \( X_1, X_2, X_3, \) and \( X_4 \) are the independent variables:
- \( X_1: \) convenience
- \( X_2: \) ease of use
- \( X_3: \) availability
- \( X_4: \) familiarity

Ramkhamhaeng University (RU)
The RU was established in 1971. RU is also one of the largest university in Thailand, with the main campus in Bangkok and the other twenty-four RU Regional Campuses located across the country, as Figure 2 shows.

SUMMARY
Findings will provide:
- The current best practices to librarians and administrators of RU’s library systems to improve their services.
- A new model of information seeking-behavior to contribute new knowledge of library services to Thai community in the field of library and information science.
- New technologies, such as Web portal to library services, in order to allow equal access to information by students at each RU Regional Campuses.

Figure 1: The relationships of conceptual framework

Figure 2: RU Regional Campuses locations
Source: http://www.ru.ac.th/english/english300/ru/regional.html

POPULATION AND SAMPLE
The general population for this study is graduate students enrolling in classes at RU Regional Campuses in the spring of 2011.