

CAI Programs For Library Users

The NP Library has come to the forefront of library computerisation again! The first to develop an on-line circulation system in this region, it has now developed two computer-assisted instruction (CAI) programs for user education.

Entitled 'OPAC TUTOR' and 'LIBRARY GUIDE', these programs aim at developing in students a proficiency in information-gathering skills, which will not only be of immediate benefit to them in their courses of study at the Polytechnic, but which they can also apply in their future careers. They were planned as independent self-paced learning resources for students who had missed the formal orientation workshops and for others needing to locate the various resources in the Library.

The OPAC TUTOR was designed to guide users on the various approaches to using the On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). By providing information on file structures and giving an explanation of commonly used terms, the user is guided towards search strategies that will produce the most effective results.

The LIBRARY GUIDE is highly informative as it covers in detail the resources, services, and facilities of the Library. Intended to put the Library's collection to optimum use, it has the effect of helping users to gain easier access to materials they need.

Under the guidance of the Automation Department and using software specifically meant for a tutorial environment, the programs were developed by staff of the Library's Reference Department. The creative use of graphic patterns, colour variation, interactive response, test tutorials and clarity of explanation all contribute towards kindling the interest of learners and making learning more effective.

Organised in modules, with step-by-step instructions, each aspect of the subject is self-contained. With the menu-driven approach, readers may select any of the options required. This facilitates learning and provides ease of access to the topic required, thus eliminating the need to have to progress from one module to the next. To help students revise what they have learnt, a summary and a review is given at the end of each lesson.

Response to these programs have been extremely positive and favourable. Chen Jee Mun, a Third Year Mechanical Engineering student, said this of the 'Library Guide':



Step-by-step instructions to help students develop proficiency in information-gathering skills

Borrowing made easier with OPAC



"I have learned the most useful information in the nick of time to help me during this examination period. All along, I had the impression that the loans on red spot books were confined to two-hour periods only. Now, I shall be able to borrow the required book overnight. It will certainly help me to achieve better results."

See Hoe Huat, a Third Year Electronics Engineering student, commented:

"I was trying to decipher the location code in this record on the database, and going through OPAC TUTOR has helped me to retrieve the desired information."

For the Library, it has always been a challenge to adopt the best approach in systems and technology to serve its users. Staff and students can look forward to further programs, when the Library will use the sophistication available in educational technology to develop programs on literature searches.