



**A MOBILE LIFE:** *A pilot project by the NP library will soon see students and staff making facility bookings and being updated on new titles through mobile phones and PDAs. Usage, however, will depend on ease of access.*

[Picture: Mugilan R.]

# WAP Mobile Library

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It will not be long before Ngee Ann Polytechnic staff and students can be informed of new titles and make bookings for facilities in the school library through their mobile phones or personal digital assistants (PDAs).

Mrs Lim-Tan Bee Lan, the library's Deputy Director, Technical & User Services, revealed this in an e-mail interview with Tribune. This is an enhancement of the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) services offered by the Library since last September to provide easier access and convenience to users.

That pilot project enabled users to check their loan records, reservations, fines and even renew items. But after initially "encouraging" response to the service, interest and usage fell.

She believes that the lagging enthusiasm can be attributed to a number of reasons: "Some of the causes for this include the high cost of telecommunication charges imposed by service providers, difficult configuration set-up for some models of handsets [and] limited screen display area on handsets."

These obstacles aside, others like Jason Lee,

19, a second-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student, need more practical services to convince him.

"Perhaps they could allow us to check on availability of books or even let us reserve books or rooms through the WAP service," he suggested, functions which are already in the pipeline.

A first-year student who would only give his name as Adam said, "I heard about it from my friends, but I have never accessed the site myself."

He added that he remembered the WAP address to be "very long and tricky" and suggested that it be shortened or simplified. This, too, is feedback that should be heeded, as the site at <http://libwww1.np.edu.sg:8088/wap/library.wml> is indeed a challenge to remember.

With an easier to remember site name and more functions, the future may look rosier for WAP services within campus. As of last November, the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) listed 3,437,300 mobile phone subscribers in Singapore.

With third-generation (3G) phones expected to be popular this year, Mrs Lim-Tan Bee Lan is optimistic that the pick-up rate for WAP will increase even further. **U**