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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Vorakitpokatorn, Pornthip</td>
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New Technologies In Communication Research
And Documentation At Thammasat University

By

Pornthip Vorakitpokatorn
New Technologies in Communication Research and Documentation
at Thammasat University

by

Pornthip Vorakitpokatorn
Faculty of Journalism & Mass Communication
Thammasat University
Prachan Road
Bangkok, Thailand

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It is crucial to define clearly about the concept of "new technologies in communication research and documentation". The technique of "Focus Grouped Interview in Public Relations Research", "Quality Approach in communication research" and the like which are now popular in Thailand could define to be the "New technologies" for me. To this presentation, I would define it as the acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of vocal, pictorial, textual and numeric information by electronic machine which is the combination of computing and telecommunication. All are known as computer—big or small as micro computer or personal computer.

One more thing I would like to tell that I love to present broader about those in Thailand. But, I have a few days to prepare this presentation. Therefore, my presentation will focused upon Thammasat University.

There are many evidences to indicate the utilization of computers in research for more than 10 years at Thammasat University. A little bit surprise is that we just began to use computer in teaching only 6-7 years ago. The department of mathematics and Accountancy were our pioneers to teach such knowledge. Unfortunately, the computer experience was limited since we have to borrow or use computer from other institutions like Chulalongkorn University or Royal Sport Club.

The rise of computers was begun by establishing of Information Processing Institution for Education and Development (IPIED) where was donated NEC System 350 and 24 NEC NS 200 terminals from Japanese Government. These computers serve the management of national rural development and the academic function of the university. A few years later, courses offered by many faculties, specially Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy brought to purchase many micro and super micro computers. Not only the needs for teaching, research and administration needed but also the increasing of computers demanded. Many micro and super micro computers were purchased to utilize in Thammasat. At present time, besides the NEC System 350 of IPIED; Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy has 32 micro computers, Faculty of Economics has 6 micro computers, Department of Computer Science—the Faculty of Science and Technology has 26 micro and super micro computers and plan to have double soon, Human Resources Institute has 6 super micro computers, Institute of East Asia Studies has one, and Faculty of Law has stwo. In addition, these are more than 50 micro or personal computers used by individual faculty members.
Besides the hardware, software development was rapidly grown in the past 2-3 years. Major things which could link to communication research and documentation are:

1. Data Bank (Software) of Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy has data on large private enterprises, state enterprises and related business researches.

2. Thai Khadi Information System at Thai Khadi Research Institute which is another data bank of all research concerning Thai society (thus like ERIC or Educational Research Information Center) collects all abstract researches in which, one way to another, studied about Thai society.

3. Central Library is having a plan to apply computers to help searching books and documentations in any subjects in the near future.

4. University MIS (Management Information System) is in a process of making the system. The data involve budgeting, personnel, academic activities, and research done by any Thammasat faculties, etc.

5. CAI or Computer-Assisted Instruction was created in teaching and learning in many programs. A new program in the process is the self-evaluation in Law. Students can use the program to test their knowledges and understanding about business. The program has variety of questions, after getting answers, the program will come up with "scores" (let's say 60%, 80%) and will tell you what is your weakness knowledge, which book, which chapter or what specific subjects you should study more. Some of my colleagues used to discuss about CAI and plan to have it in the near future.

To the question "how new technology, like computer, utilizes in communication research and documentation at Thammasat University."

The correct answer is "we do not such use it too much." Most use in analyzing data for the research. Even we have Thai Khadi data bank, Business, or State Enterprises data bank which these systems were limited in terms of data, personnel and unwellknown. To my knowledge, there are only one or two people from the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication have used the service of Thai Khadi data bank. None used Business or State Enterprises data bank.
Now, let me analyze why such new technology is not popular or utilized in communication research:

1. Those potential users are fulculy members who I do believe that they have a limit knowledge and experience. Such as for my self, I had a very little experience of using SPSS analyzing the data for my dissertation. Now, there are SPSSX and many more.

2. The attempts of Thai Khadi or Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy to have a good data bank have confronted with limited data collection. The cooperation, exchanging information or help each other to collect all informations is new. In addition, many researches have done by private enterprises and some faculty members kept it confidential.

3. Most researchers in communication are quantitative researchers, dominating by field survey. "Exploratory research" which you can find that the previous researches and documentations are less important than going out to see the real world. This could lead to (1) use computerization in analyzing data mainly, (2) on the other hand, the recognition of having a good data bank of documentation or organizing all previous documentations is very low.

4. Besides very high cost of computers, Thai Government controlled all state and state enterprises by passing a regulation which created any redtape system. That is-- every institute must get "Permitted License" seperately from budgeting in order to have a right to get computer.

Thammasat University, for example, if any faculties want to get one—let say the Faculty of Journalism and Mass communication; besides to get the budgest which is now very squeezing, the Faculty must write a proposal indicate "what purposes and how much" utilizational needs to Thammasat University Computer Committee. After the Committee approved the proposal, the University must say "yes", then the proposal will be sent to the National Computer Committee to reconsider and give final permission with a license. In this time we can proceed to buy computer, in which another regulation of purchasing will be applied. It takes not less than 6 months for the whole process.
That's all our confronting problem. Lastly, before closing this presentation, the latest news about new technology in communication research and documentation is we, on behalf of Thammasat University, will conduct a National study on the impact of new technology in various fields, including laws, business, communication, education, economics, psychological-social impact, etc. This involves over two million bahts expenses.

In summary, the development of computers in Thailand as well as at Thammasat University has been growing and expanding rapidly. Most growth and expansion are found mainly for the hardware computer. For the software computer seemed to leave a long engagement in research. The new department of Computer Science and other fields started to use and prepare some software in teaching-learning experience, especially the CATI. To the purpose of administration, MIS will be soon applied and could be rapidly expanded in the near future as well. Now, what about research, there have been many programs used in analyzing data mainly. The DATA BANK is now developing. In the near future, Thammasat University will have DATA BANK in business, state enterprises and Thai studies. Even those who are in the Journalism and Mass Communication can utilize DATA BANK from Thai Khadi Research Institute, Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy and the Central Library, it could not be effective or fulfill to use in the area—if those who are in the field would have enough knowledge and would joy to make such DATA BANK by themselves.