

NEW SUNDAY TIMES

LIBRARY FACILITIES

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LIBRARIES MUST KEEP UP WITH TIMES

FOR a week last month, Libraries Week (Oct 8-13) celebrated the nation's much-loved libraries. It was a time to remind the public about the contributions libraries, librarians and library workers made to their communities.

As one who uses public libraries, I was dismayed at the way the Tun Razak Library in Ipoh, Perak, is being managed. Suffice to say, it was below expectations.

The library is in the city centre, next to a school and near the magistrate's court.

The last time I visited the library was 20 years ago. However, when I was there recently, I felt like time had stood still since

1998. It looked the same, with the same coat of paint and the same, ancient rules and regulations.

Let me start with the borrowing rules. I cannot access the online library catalogue from home. If the library aims to be user friendly, one should be able to request and renew books from their website, choose which branch to pick them up from and return the books to any branch, including the mobile library, if there is one.

With advancement in technology, not allowing one to bring charging cables to the library for their electronic devices is unthinkable. In this day and age, almost everyone works from his laptop, iPad or mobile phone.



The Tun Abdul Razak Library needs more books that appeal to young readers. FILE PIC

Just imagine how one should do one's research in a library without the cables. Apparently, this rule applies only at the Tun Razak Library.

If the reason lies in short circuits or faulty sockets, getting them fixed will attract more people to use the library facilities more often. I saw a group of people in the library, who were reading newspapers, and only a handful borrowed books.

Perhaps, the library management can set up a multimedia section, where people can view or borrow CDs or DVDs. This will be

beneficial for the public, especially for academicians, teachers, students and children.

Even the Internet connection at the library is slow. The library should consider buying new books as the ones available are outdated.

Authors like Enid Blyton and Agatha Christie do not appeal to young readers of today. Getting feedback from the community on their favourite authors and the type of books they would prefer to read can easily resolve this.

Gone are the days where strict librarians walk around, shooing

kids and pointing to the "Keep Quiet" signs. A user-friendly library will be a beneficial meeting point for millennials to work, discuss and spend their time.

When I am in a public library, I feel I am a member of a wide community and society — sharing a public space and service, which I value.

I hope the authorities will look into these shortcomings and consider upgrading the library with modern features.

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