From Limited to Limitless Access: An Exploration
of Indonesian Students' Online Experiences in
Australia

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*Abstract: This paper reports preliminary findings of a larger study investigating Internet access and usage by Indonesian students in Australian universities. Questionnaires were administered to 94 undergraduate and postgraduate students in Victorian-based universities to construct an overview of the level of their online access and usage. In addition, ten in-depth interviews were carried out with targeted participants who had previously resided in various cities and suburbs in Indonesia. The interviews were a tool to examine their online experiences and the extent to which the Internet has contributed to their learning activities. The quantitative findings revealed that before coming to Australia, most of the participants had connected online from Internet kiosks, home or work places, while in Australia the majority accessed the Internet at home. During their university studies in Australia, nearly 40% of the participants used the Internet for academic purposes between three to five hours during a weekday and less than one hour during a weekend day. Although half of the survey participants chose the Internet as the most useful study resource, some claimed that books and lecturers have also played important roles in supporting their learning. The study concludes that the majority of the participants have increased as well as improved their online usage during their studies in Australia and planned to maintain the level of their Internet access after returning to Indonesia. This paper may assist academics to get a better understanding of Indonesian students' learning activities in Australia.*

Keywords: Internet Access, Internet Usage, Learning, Indonesian Students, Australian Universities

## The Internet and Learning Activities

FOLLOWING THE RAPID growth of Internet use, interdisciplinary researchers have investigated the Internet and its social implications (Rice, 2005). It is clear that the Internet offers the easiest ways to communicate through the utilisation of e-mails, chat rooms, mailing list and newsgroups. It also facilitates a wide range of activities such as surfing Web sites, creating personal Webs, listening or downloading music and reading online newspapers (Jung, 2005).

One of the Internet researchers' interests is examining who has and who does not have access to the Internet (Hargittai, 2003; van Dijk, 1999, 2000, 2006; van Dijk & Hacker, 2003). In discussing the Internet access, Minges (2002) argues that access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) might be influenced by physical ownership/availability, affordability and skills. As DiMaggio and Hargittai (2001) underline that the key questions do not only concern with online access but also investigate what people can achieve using the Internet. Furthermore, Livingstone (2002) and Minges (2002) point out that 'access to ICT' has a different meaning to 'use of ICT.'

The Internet usage in higher education has been discussed across disciplines. On the one hand, proponents have been exploring new opportunities of Internet usage for education through studies, such as those focusing on online learning/tutorials (Arbaugh & Hwang, 2006), the Internet as a teaching tool (Chittaro & Ranon, 2007; Peterson, Kaakko, Smart, Jorgenson, & Herzog, 2007), and online library (MacAuley, 1997). On the other hand, opponents have argued that the Internet could be misused. Their studies have focused on students' academic dishonesty (Akbulut et al., 2007), Internet dependency (Choi, Jarzabek, Song, & La, 2001; McMillan & Morrison, 2006), Internet addiction (Yang & Tung, 2007), and potentially other negative consequences related to Internet use (Rotunda, Kass, Sutton, & Leon, 2003). In addition, research studies on university students' actual Internet usage as a source of academic information have been very few compared to the well-mapped Internet use of students in school contexts (Selwyn, 2008).

## Indonesian Students in Australia

The Republic of Indonesia is located in South East Asia. It is an archipelago between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean with a population of over 230 million. By the end of 2007 the estimated number of Internet users in Indonesia was 20 million, around 4.3% of Asian users. This number represented a rapid increase from 1.9 million users in 2000 to 20 million in 2007. However, the percentage of online users to the total population is only 8.5%, which is much lower than the Internet penetration in other

Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia. In 2007 there were 298 Internet service providers with operational licenses from the Indonesian government, although only 202 companies were registered as members of the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008b; Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association, 2007; Internet World Stats, 2007b).

Indonesia's neighbour, Australia is a continent between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean. In 2007 there were nearly 21 million people in Australia with 15.5 million Internet users and 689 Internet service providers. This contributes to 72.9% penetration of Internet users in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007, 2008; Central Intelligence Agency, 2008a; Internet World Stats, 2007a).

These facts may have influenced the different ICT practices in the educational sector between the two countries. For instance, most of Australian universities provide a wide variety of online resources. Students, lecturers and academic staff have free access to viewing and downloading electronic journals, reading online books and communicating via e-mails and online discussions.

There are very few studies investigating Indonesian students in Australia; those conducted focus on adjustment problems among Indonesian students in New Zealand universities (Everts & Sodjakusumah, 1996) and intercultural adjustments of Indonesian postgraduates students in Australia (Novera, 2004). Therefore, my study is primarily an exploration of the students' experiences of accessing and using the Internet both in Indonesia and Australia.

## Research Questions

The needs to fill in the gap in the literature about Indonesian students' learning experiences in Australia drew my interest to investigate how Indonesian students in Australian universities cope with their new learning environment. This paper aims to address three questions:

1. What kind of Internet access had they had before coming to and while studying in Australia?
2. What were their previous online experiences in Indonesia?
3. How do they currently use the Internet for academic and non-academic purposes?

## Methodology

This exploratory study applied a mixed method (Babbie, 2008; Neuman, 2006) by collecting data through questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques provides broadly consistent data with complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (Bryman, 1988; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). By employing both methods the researcher is able to claim the validity of the results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), strengthen the power of studies, inferences and conclusions (Rocco et al., 2003). Moreover, early quantitative research may clarify the research problems and provide information for selecting participants for the qualitative in-depth interviews (Bryman, 1988).

This study applied a purposive sampling technique which is appropriate to select unique cases that are especially informative or in specialised population (Neuman, 2006). The procedure of purposive sampling is common particularly if the researcher aims to seek specific groups or settings or individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) to obtain the most specific information related to the research questions (Kemper, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2003).

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in Melbourne during June to September 2007 and were analysed using SPSS for the questionnaires and NVivo for in-depth interviews (Pallant, 2007; Richards, 1999).The survey involved 94 Indonesian students in Victoria-based universities in the range of age 17 to 48 years, with a median of 27 years. The participants were equally divided between male (51.1%) and female (48.9%). Two thirds (67.0%) of the participants were Masters and PhD students, the others (33.0%) were undergraduates in various disciplines studying at Monash University, University of Melbourne, Victoria University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Deakin University and Swinburne University. Regarding their financial support, all of the scholarship recipients in this study were postgraduate students (52.1%), while most of the undergraduate participants were funded by their family (30.9%), and a further approximately ten percent of the total participants paid the tuition fees by themselves or were sponsored by their employers.

Almost half of the participants (46.8%) arrived in Australia between six months and one year at the time of the survey. A further 36.2% had been staying in Australia for one to two years period, and the remaining 17.0% had been living in the country for more than two years.

Before pursuing tertiary studies in Australia, 61.7% of the student participants had a monthly income of less than two million rupiah[1]. Almost one fourth (24.5%) earned between Rp 2,000,000 and Rp 4,000,000 per month, the other 13.8% had an in-

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[1] When data were collected one Australian dollar was equal to approximately eight thousand rupiah. For instance Rp 2,000,000 was equal to AUD 250.

come higher than Rp 4,000,000 on a monthly basis. After arriving in Australia, over half of the participants (55.3%) earned between $1,001 and $2,000 per month. Around one fourth (25.5%) received less than $1,000 and the others had a higher amount than $2,001 per month. In this particular question, income was defined as any funds received by participants including living allowance from any scholarship and part-time wages.

Before departing to Australia, most of the survey participants resided in the middle of cities (57.4%), suburbs (40.4%), and small cities (2.1%) in various areas of Indonesia. Ten students participated in the in-depth interviews. This number was slightly over ten percent of the total participants in the survey data. The targeted participants were chosen based on their previous living areas in Indonesia. The Republic of Indonesia consists of around 17,500 islands with Java as the most populated area in Indonesia, covering approximately 6.9% of total area with 58.8% of total population living on this island (Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2005). This was the main rationale for selecting seven interviewees who resided in the cities and suburbs of Java, particularly those who came from Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung and Yogyakarta. The remaining three participants were city residents of Bali, Padang and Papua.

## Findings

### *Internet Access*

There is a range of places for accessing the Internet: using a computer or a laptop on campus, at home, in someone else's house, in a public library, in an Internet café or kiosk, from work place, mobile phone, even from digital television (Livingstone, 2002). In this study the participant's Internet access at home was investigated further by identifying the type of connections they used: dial-up pay per use, dial-up monthly subscription or broadband. I also investigated the participants' monthly Internet expenditure, or their total expenses per month for accessing the Internet.

In Indonesia most of the survey participants had home Internet access (61.7%) and the number increased while they were in Australia (87.2%). However, their type of Internet access was quite different. Dial-up connection was the most popular choice among participants who had home Internet access in Indonesia, while their most favourite connection in Australia was broadband.

Although the majority of the student participants had home online access in Indonesia, some of them went to Internet kiosks[2] (33%), the others accessed the Internet at home (30.9%) and in work place (26.6%). Only a few participants had access on campus or using mobile phones. On the contrary, in Australia over two third of the participants accessed the Internet at home (71.3%), the other 22.3% accessed on campus, and only a small percentage had online connection from other places.

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[2] In Indonesia, both Internet kiosk and Internet café are commercial pay per use operations. Internet cafés are often located in the city areas and Internet kiosks are frequently located in suburbs. Another difference is that Internet cafés may charge a higher cost per hour compared to Internet kiosks. In 2007, the cost for accessing the Internet from these sites was around Rp 4,000-8,000 per hour or approximately 50 cents to 1 AUD.
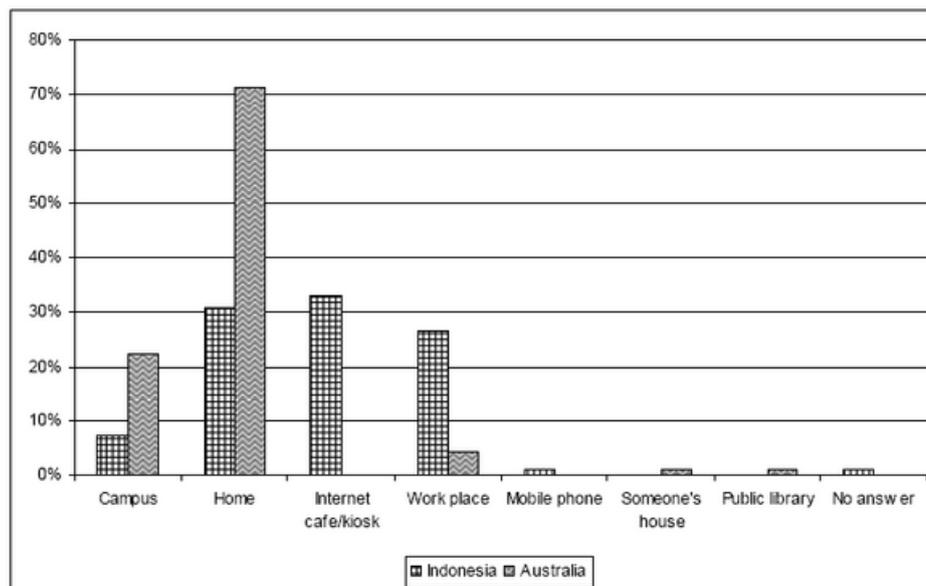
Figure 1: Main Online Access in Indonesia and Australia

The qualitative data found that most of the interviewees had difficulties in accessing the Internet in their home country. One postgraduate participant, who had Internet access at her office but often went to an Internet café, explained that the main problem was related to the speed of connection.

> It was quite slow when I used [the Internet] in my office. Sometimes I wasn't patient enough to wait until the screen was completed, but I needed the information so I had to wait. If I wanted to get faster access I went to an Internet café. (Emma)

One masters student from Yogyakarta shared a similar experience:

> At that time access to the Internet was very limited so the only place we had was an Internet café or we call it 'warnet'… there were many Internet café [s] around my campus so it's not difficult to get access. The main problem was the speed was very slow. Sometimes we got excited but when we came to the computer and started downloading, it took a long time. Just to send one single e-mail it took five to ten minutes. It's very depressing. (Rudi)

Another postgraduate student who lived in the city area of Jakarta illustrated:

> The Internet system we had in the office at that time was not really sophisticated. The system was limited to the use of e-mails rather than using Internet explorer to find any information. (Lidia)

### Internet Expenditure

Internet expenditure includes all expenses paid by the participants for accessing the Internet. For those who had online connection at home, the cost consisted of landline telephone monthly fee and Internet subscription or Internet pre-paid payment, while for participants who did not have home Internet access, the cost covered a rental online connection at Internet kiosks or cafes. The survey found that over 40% of the participants paid less than Rp 100,000 for accessing the Internet, while the other 30.9% spent between Rp 100,001 to Rp 200,000, and a further 21.3% paid out over Rp 200.000 per month. In Australia, half of the participants (51.1%) spent $21 to $60, a further 36.2% paid less than $20, and only 11.7% spent more than $61 on a monthly basis.

## The Differences

In response to the participants' online experiences in Indonesia and Australia, most of the interviewees complained about their difficulties in securing access in Indonesia and the qualities of Internet connection. One interviewee from Bali compared her experience:

> In Australia the Internet is the most common tools to get any information. But in Indonesia, it is very difficult to get access to the Internet, both at home and outside … Here [in Australia] we can get access anywhere in university, it is not difficult to find computers and have Internet access. [In Indonesia] even though we have already the computer and Internet access, the system often doesn't work well. (Kanti)

Similarly, two interviewees from the city of Bandung and Padang noticed the speed of access.

> The most impressive is the speed here [in Australia]. (Jennie)
>
> Compared to Indonesia, we have a faster speed here and I really enjoy that … Secondly, because I'm a full time student in Australia, I don't have to go to kiosks like in Indonesia. I just go to the office or library and I don't have to pay to use the Internet for sure, but in Indonesia I have to go to kiosk, travel on public transport or walk, and then pay a lot of money because the connection is not as fast as here. (Devi)

Not only pointing out online access, at least two students reported that the Internet has become their essential need.

> First, the connection here [in Australia] is very good compared to Indonesia, especially in my place, Papua. The second is, using the Internet here for me as a student, is like a primary need. (Vio)
>
> Here [in Australia] I find the Internet is very fast while in Indonesia the access is very slow. … I used the Internet only for work purposes in Indonesia, but I use it for everything here in Australia. (Emma)

One student from a suburb of Yogyakarta illustrated his experience in details:

> It is easy to find public Internet access in Indonesia, we can go to Internet café. But to get online service at home or office would be very expensive and people think what the benefit is, compared to their income. In here [Australia], it's much cheaper to have access at home and the university provides free access but it's not easy to find public Internet access like in Indonesia. I think it's not a problem because we can get our access easily and simply like having access to electricity, gas, water or phone. (Rudi)

A postgraduate student from Surabaya also compared her online expenses. She described:

> Besides the speed, of course the cost is different. In Indonesia, it's very expensive … here [in Australia] I have unlimited download connection at home and we share the cost with three friends so it's very cheap. (Rista)

## Previous Online Experiences

This section recorded the participants' first experiences using the Internet, their first impression and past online experiences related to their learning. The majority of the participants had used the Internet more than previous six years (79.8%), a further 19.1% had used it between two and six years and only one participant had practised the Internet less than two years at the time of the survey. Furthermore, almost three fourth of the Indonesian students in this study had never attended an Internet training (74.4%) while the others had learnt the Internet at one course (10.6%), and two or more trainings (15%).

Confirming the quantitative data, all of the interviewees admitted that they didn't learn to use the Internet through formal training. Some of the participants said that they learnt from family members. For instance, Amy, an undergraduate student, learnt from her father, and Rista, a postgraduate interviewee, was taught by her husband. The others knew from their friends or found out by themselves.

> First, my friend introduced me, but I think he was a beginner user like me. Then my little sister taught me a bit more about using the Internet especially how to open an e-mail account and how to set up *Yahoo!* mail, how to send and read e-mail. (Rudi)
>
> I think I learnt by myself. But sometimes I went to kiosk with my friend so we learnt together how to do that. (Devi)
>
> My friend in the office taught me. I didn't take any course. (Kanti)
>
> I think it was more autodidact, in a sense that you have friends that used the Internet and you used it too. I have never attended a formal course or something like that. (Lidia)

Only one interviewee, who previously resided in city area of Padang, learnt about the Internet at school.

> When I was in senior high school we had an extracurricular about how to use the Internet. My teacher taught me. Actually it was not only for the Internet use, but mainly related to computer use. (Jennie)

Furthermore, when the interviewees were asked about their first impression, some of them were surprised by the Internet's capabilities. One student from Yogyakarta noted:

> It was really exciting … its capacity to bring different or variety of information that we haven't known before and it's very different with other media like television … I can easily find information of what happen in other faraway places … the image on the Internet is so live and colourful. It's very entertaining … very interesting, the way it displays pictures, not only flat or black and white. (Rudi)

Another postgraduate student observed:

> I think it's fantastic. I just clicked on and I found so many information … it was [in] 2001, I think, I found so many things to read. (Vio)

Similarly, two students gave comments on the capacities of the Internet.

> It was surprising because at the first time I used, everything I wanted to know was available. (Rista)
> We can get any information we want. It looks like easy for me to find information related to my study. Then we can surf also entertainment and gossip. (Jennie)

However, there were also different impressions as two postgraduate interviewees noted:

> At that time, I think the Internet was very difficult to learn. I just knew how to open and read e-mails. (Kanti)
> At that time … it [the Internet] was a bit complicated not in term of technical but in term of spending time because the connection was very slow and not efficient. I have to wait at [Internet] kiosk to get connection, to open the Web site. I didn't really enjoy the Internet at that time because of wasting so many time sitting in front of the computer and did nothing. (Devi)

This study observed that sending and writing e-mail were the most popular activities among the interviewees. Majority of them had used the Internet mostly for e-mail communication in the past.

> I learnt [using] the Internet not because doing thesis, but because my friend used e-mail and I wanted to have my own e-mail …Yeah, I use the Internet at the first time for e-mail although it was not regularly. Then when I did my thesis I used the Internet more. (Vio)
> He [my friend] introduced me how to open [an] e-mail account … *Mailcity* and *Yahoo!* are the first two my e-mail accounts … at that time I didn't really understand the whole functions of using the Internet and I didn't have any idea, how the Internet could help me doing my job. So I mostly did my job manual or printed. Besides e-mails, I touched the Internet only to find an image for our design of banner for our activities. (Rudi)

Another two students practiced the Internet for searching information and chatting.

> I remembered that I searched information about Disneyland. (Amy)

> Actually my first purpose of using the Internet was for chatting especially I think that I'm an English student and I need to broaden my experience in using my language. Yeah, at that time I chat a lot and then … I did just general browsing. (Siti)

Furthermore, an interviewee who holds a bachelor in medicine illustrated her previous Internet usage in Indonesia.

> I used the Internet very rarely when I did my bachelor's degree studies, but when I did my two years internship at the hospital, I usually used the Internet to get comparisons of some cases for my patients, particularly rare cases, so I can check the patients' symptoms and conditions. For example I used *Popmed*, specific Web site for medical students to get case reports from other countries. (Jennie)

## Recent Online Usage

In this paper, the participants' online experiences covered the total hours spent for using the Internet in a weekday and in a weekend day for academic and non-academic activities, their popular online activities, and the participants' opinions concerning the most useful items to support their study. The academic activities consisted of downloading electronic journal articles, reading online resources, having contact with lecturers or tutors or supervisors. The non-academic activities consisted of playing games, chatting, doing online banking, as well as downloading music or films.

More than one third of the participants (38.3%) spent three to five hours on a weekday using the Internet for academic purposes. Slightly a lesser percentage (33.0%) spent one to three hours, a further 18.1% used the Internet more than five hours, and only 10.6% had less than one hour of usage. The trend of the online usage for non-academic purposes during a weekday was different. Around 31.9% of the participants had one to three hours online usage for non-academic reasons, a further 30.9% used it less than one hour, while 21.3% had online usage between three to five hours, and the other 16% spent over five hours usage for similar purposes.

During a weekend day the majority of the participants (38.3%) spent less than one hour for academic purposes, a further 30.9% had one to three hours usage, around 20.2% had three to five hours, and only 10.6% used the Internet more than five hours. In the category of online usage during a weekend day for non-academic reasons, the highest proportion (30.9%) had three to five hours usage, then a further 25.5% spent less than one hour, the other 23.4% used

the Internet between one to three hours, and the remaining 20.2% spent more than five hours usage.

Online activities in this study covered both academic and non-academic practices. *Communicating via e-mail* was the most popular activity among the student participants. Most of them (40.4%) were involved in e-mail activities for more than 40 times in a two week period. *Looking for online news* was one of the popular practices with 31.9% of the participants have involved in this activity for 21 to 40 times within two weeks. The next most frequent activity was *looking for information related study* where 40.4% of the participants have done this for 6 to 20 times within two weeks. Furthermore, the majority of the students in this study have taken part in these activities less than five times during two weeks: *looking for product information* (40.4%), *downloading music, film, or images* (52.1%), *doing Internet banking* (61.7%), *shopping* (83.0%), *looking for event listings* (85.1%), *looking for information on career or further education* (79.8%), *participating in online courses* (84.0%), *searching information about computers or programming* (87.2%), *looking at others' personal home pages* (66.0%), *creating or maintaining own Web site* (81.9%) and *looking at adult entertainment* (94.7%).

Confirming the quantitative data, most of the interviewees mentioned that they used the Internet mainly to support their present studies.

> Browsing information I need related to my study, and then keeping in touch with my friends in Indonesia or in other countries. (Siti)

Another student explained that her frequency of online usage has increased during her study in Australia.

> Now I use it [the Internet] more intensively. I mean the frequency increases … mainly in [the use of] databases. Before I came to Australia to do my PhD, I didn't actually access a lot of databases. (Lidia)

Both undergraduate and postgraduate interviewees gave similar comments that in Australia they took advantages of the Internet to support their academic activities.

> Now I'm studying *reproductive science* and most of the teachers use the references from the Internet rather than books so the Internet is very useful for me. (Jennie)
> I use it to support my research, and communication such as VoIP as well. (Amy)
> I use the Internet for almost everything. I send e-mails to my supervisor. She prefers to communicate with me via e-mails, and of course

my friends, my colleagues and my groups. And searching some journals, or information from international organizations … also for shopping and doing Internet banking … I can do everything using the Internet. (Devi)

Concerning online usage for assignment or final test preparation, this student described her routine:

> For assignment, usually the lecturer gives the questions and references and we have to make arguments. So we need to know what other people say and we can find these using the Internet. We search the article under the same topics and then we compare and combine those arguments. (Kanti)

A further comprehensive answer was described by this interviewee:

> Mostly for my study, because the university provides, or delivers all information using the Internet and they provides … something like our private portal that leads us, at least once a day to check our e-mail. It is very different compared to Indonesia, where people still depend on written information so we need to find the information on the noticeboard, we need to go to the third floor or fourth floor just to find the information on the noticeboard or share information with other friends, then confirm to administration desk ... also because the university provides online library, huge resources that allow us to explore any references, that helps us a lot. (Rudi)

Interestingly, some student participants used the Internet for academic and non-academic reasons at the same time.

> Mainly for study, checking e-mails, and search information about my favourite actors. (Jennie)
> Now I use the Internet not only for academic stuff … I find the Internet is very useful to make communication regularly and quick. I also use it to search information, put my opinion in a mailing list. (Vio)
> I use the Internet for my study, work and entertainment. (Emma)

## The Most Useful Study Resources

The majority of the participants chose the Internet as the most useful item to support their study (58.1% of the undergraduates and 46.0% of the postgraduates). The next popular study resources among the undergraduate participants were lecturers or tutors (22.6%), followed by books or friends (9.7% each).

On the contrary, the next preferences for postgraduate participants were books (27%) and lecturers or tutors (25.4%). Some students who selected the Internet as the most important academic resource gave the following reasons:

> Simply because we can easily access the Internet, while for books or lecturers, probably because I don't have time to go to the library to borrow books, but with the Internet I can access it easily at home. No need to take shower and go to campus. (Amy)
> Well, I think I depend on the library to get information about my assessment, my assignment and also the Internet to get the latest information about the topic that I want to discuss. (Siti)
> Because the teachers mainly use online journals and we use books only for basic science, for example if I want to get new information about specific drugs. (Jennie)
> Because the Internet is so quick and easy, you just put the keyword and click and everything will come up … As a research student sometimes I found it's very difficult to get resources or references and we have to manage our time properly. We do have a due date for submission. When we go to the Internet I found it's easy to find references. (Vio)

A postgraduate participant who chose lecturers as her main source of information said:

> My course, risk management, is very new for me. Although I have many books as resources, the lecturers' explanations are the most important source for me. (Kanti)

However, the other participants believed in books rather than the Internet, lecturers or friends.

> We can read much information from books rather than online journal article … They have different sounds. Journals are mainly about research and have the same patterns, while books have more explanations about certain things. (Emma)
> Books have gone through a more rigid review or peer review compared to the Internet … I believe that if I really have to compare books and other sources like information from Web sites, not from journal articles, then I prefer using books. (Lidia)
> I don't like to sit in front of the computer too long, especially my eyes get tired very easily and so does my body. When I have books I can bring them anytime, I don't have to bring my laptop or bring my computer, or whatever. I can read books everywhere. (Devi)

> Because we can know the whole content, sometimes journal articles on the Internet only give short information or abstracts. (Rista)

One master student explained that both the Internet and books were important for him.

> Currently I feel that the latest information related to my study is available through the Internet. But in my field, we still use, for example book of interview, which is published long long time ago and it's not provided by the Internet. So that kind of information which contains theoretical issues and could involve us more deep into discussion, which is come up into current debate, and then we refer to that book. (Rudi)

## Discussion

In 1990s Indonesia connected to the global Internet network for the first time, and then the number of Internet users has been increasing rapidly in this country. Although 61.7% of the participants had online connection at home in Indonesia, one third (33%) preferred to have online connection from Internet cafés or kiosks. Having online access at home is often considered an expensive option and the most affordable choice was to pay online access through Internet kiosks. The evidence in my study was similar to the previous research confirming more than 40% of online users in Indonesia had accessed the Internet through kiosks (Minges, 2002).

Moreover, some interviewees have indicated their difficulties in securing online access in Indonesia. This may be caused by the inadequate equipment and infrastructures at home or workplace, also the fact that the number of Internet service providers (ISPs) in Indonesia was less than 300 companies servicing 20 million of online users, while in Australia the number of ISPs was more than doubled, dealing with 15 million of online users.

In Australia, 87.2% of the participants had online connection at home and the majority accessed the Internet at home. My findings were in line with the Australian Bureau of Statistics data that 64% of the Australian household had home Internet access and the most popular online access was home (61%). In addition, most of the interviewees share the same experience that the Internet has become their primary need in Australia.

In their earlier online experiences in Indonesia, most of the participants had learnt using the Internet from friends, family members or by themselves. In addition, their first knowledge about the Internet was related to the use of e-mails. During their studies in Australia, the most popular online activity was also related to e-mail communication.

Previous researchers have suggested that college students were heavy users of the Internet (Chou & Hsiao, 2000; Jones, 2002; Rainie, Kalehoff, & Hess, 2002). My study found that nearly 40% of participants spent three to five hours on a weekday using the Internet for learning. These activities consisted of downloading electronic journal, reading online resources and contacting lecturers, tutors or supervisors. In a study about college students and learning activities, some researchers have mentioned that the interactivity of the Internet might have positive impacts to students learning process (Katz, 2002; Lu, Ma, Turner, & Huang, 2007; McMurray, 2007). Similar results also found in my research showed most of the interviewees admitted using the Internet to support their present study such as accessing databases, reading academic journals or searching information from international Web sites. In addition, more than 50% participants chose the Internet as the most useful study resources, even though a few others still believed in books, lecturers and tutors. Moreover, it was not surprising that online usage for non-academic purposes decreased during a weekday but improved during a weekend. Over 30% of the participants spent three to five hours for non-academic activities during a weekend such as playing games, chatting, doing online banking or downloading music or films.

## Conclusion

There were different patterns of Internet access owned by the students in this study as residents in Indonesia and while they were studying in Australian universities. Although the majority had Internet access at home, the most popular type of access in Indonesia is dial-up, while in Australia a broadband connection is more usual. Furthermore, most of the participants preferred accessing the Internet from kiosks in Indonesia but they chose to connect online at home while studying in Australia.

Concerning the participants' previous online experiences, the majority had used the Internet more than six years prior to the survey. Communication via e-mail was the most popular online activity among student participants and this was also their main reason for starting to use the Internet before coming to Australia.

Regarding the students' online usage in Australia, almost 40% of the survey participants spent three to five hours using the Internet for academic purposes during a typical weekday. Over half of the survey participants selected the Internet as their most useful source of information to support their university studies in Australia, although some considered lecturers and books as the important references.

There are always opportunities to use the Internet effectively for learning at the university context. Once there is a familiarity with new information and communication technologies and high speed Internet connections, there is an extensive access to knowledge and network with academics around the world.

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