MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY : MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of information literacy programmes in Malaysia. Information literacy programmes in Malaysia are growing and the awareness of information literacy is increasingly important due to wide variety of information sources and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The articles also discussed various initiatives taken by the various government agencies such as Ministry of Education, National Library of Malaysia public libraries and universities libraries in order to well equipped our students with the information knowledge skills to create an information literate society and knowledge workers.

Keywords: Information literacy, information skill and knowledge society

INTRODUCTION

Vision 2020 was launched in February 1991 and one of its main challenges is to create an information rich society that is fully able to adapt, innovate and invent to becoming a scientific and progressive society. A true information society or information-rich society would require great effort by the whole nation to inculcate information values and provide the necessary infrastructure and education in all aspects.

The National IT Agenda (NITA) launched in 1996 by the National IT Council (NITC) provides the foundation and framework for the utilisation of information and communication technology (ICT) to transform Malaysia into a developed nation. NITA focuses on the development of people, info structure and applications to create value, to provide equity and access to all Malaysian, into a value-based knowledge society by the year 2020.

Figure 1: National IT Agenda (Source: National Information Technology Council, 2001)
Knowledge-Based Economy Master Plan indicates that the most critical asset for the K-based economy is human capital. In a K-based economy, educated and skilled human resources, or human capital, are the most valuable asset and knowledge is the most critical factor of production. Knowledge-based economy may be defined as an economy in which knowledge, creativity and innovation play an ever-increasing and important role in generating and sustaining growth.

**Figure 2:** Malaysia’s Vision for the Knowledge Economy (Source: Multimedia Development Corporation, 2005)

One of the key area in the Tenth Malaysian Plan 2011 – 2015 is to develop and retain a first-world talent base. Highly skilled talent base that is able to rapidly respond creatively to economic changes, and is centred on developing and utilising knowledge is the core of innovation and a productive high income economy.

These acknowledge the importance of information to equip people as knowledge worker. Seeking, accessing and using information ethically need to be nurture in order to develop information literate society.

**DEFINITION OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY**

Development of information literacy evolved in accordance with the development of information and communication technology (ICT) which started in 1970’s. Information technology trigger the revolution of information development described by various term such as the information highway and information explosion. ICT had made tremendous impact on the society, and transformed the way human work, learn, communicate and live. ICT skills are applied for seeking and exploiting information in almost all aspect of human activities.
Gaining skills in information literacy is very essential as people become engaged in using a wide variety of information sources via technology devices. Rapid transformation in technology by so-called information age due to the presence of information and communication technologies (ICT) requires one to be versatile in seeking and retrieving information.

Information literacy

American Library Association defined information literacy as a set of abilities requiring individuals to be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.

The Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) defines information literacy as the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information. The ACRL has created a set of standards that outline in detail the skill needed to be information literate.

According to the Information Literacy Competency Standard for Higher Education, an information literate individual is able to:

- determine the extent of information needed
- access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- evaluate the information and its sources critically
- incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and
- access and use information ethically and legally

According to IFLA, in order to survive and develop, make decision and solve problem in every facet of life—personal, social, educational and professional, individuals, communities and nations need information.

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) defined information literacy as knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.

According to US National Commission on Library and Information Science, information literacy encompasses knowledge of one's information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand; it is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the Information Society, and is part of the basic human right of lifelong learning.

Media Literacy

Fedorov, Alexander in his thesis title ‘Media Education and Media Literacy: Experts’ Opinions’, 2003 stated definition of media literacy from two (2) experts as below:

Aufderheide, P., Firestone: “Media literacy, the movement to expand notions of literacy to include the powerful postprint media that dominate our informational landscape, helps people understand, produce, and negotiate meanings in a culture made up of powerful images, words,
and sounds. A medialiterate person – everyone should have the opportunity to become one – can decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media”

Kubey, R: “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a variety of forms”

Media literacy is the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the different types of mediums and formats in which data, information and knowledge are created, stored, communicated, and presented such as newspapers and journals, magazines, radio, television broadcasts, cable, CD-ROM, DVD, mobile telephones, PDF text formats, and JPEG format for photos and graphics the purposes for which they can be used.

Media and Information Literacy

UNESCO’s Information for All Programme (IFAP), based on Alexandria Declaration of 2005, defined media and information literacy as the capacity of people to recognize their information needs; locate and evaluate the quality of information; store and retrieve information; make effective and ethical use of information and applies information to create and communicate knowledge. Over the years, the concept has become increasingly important, especially with the explosion of information and new media emerging in this era of globalization.

INFORMATION LITERACY SCENARIO IN MALAYSIA

National Library of Malaysia

The National Library of Malaysia is a Federal Department under Ministry of Tourism and Culture. It was established under the National Library Act 1972 (Act 80) (incorporating all amendments up to 1 January 2006). This act was amended in 1987 according to the development of library and information services in Malaysia.

Establishment Objectives

The purpose and objectives of National Library of Malaysia as stipulated in Part II, Section 3 National Library Act 1972 (Act 80) (incorporating all amendments up to 1 January 2006) are as below:

- To make available for user of present and future generations a national collection of library resources;
- To facilitate nation-wide access to library resources available within the country and abroad;
- To provide leadership on matters pertaining to libraries.

Philosophy

To develop culturally advanced individuals with a love of knowledge acquired through lifetime reading in order to cultivate the minds of Malaysians towards excellence and therefore to bring about innovations which can enhance the tradition of knowledge in this country.
Vision
To be a World Class Leader in Library Development, Services and Leadership

Mission
- To lead in library development and library services
- To be a centre of excellence for national intellectual heritage
- To manage and provide easy access national information resources
- To inculcate reading habit among Malaysians

Information Literacy Division
Information Literacy Division was formed in 2002 under the restructuring of the National Library of Malaysia. The division is responsible towards the realisation of reading culture among Malaysian. Its main function is to plan and coordinates reading and information literacy programmes throughout Malaysia.

Information Specialist Division
Information Specialist Division was also formed in 2002 under the restructuring of National Library of Malaysia. The division is responsible to provide research services for library users and members of the public, apart from distributing local information to communities.

Information Literacy Subject Matter Specialist (SME) Group
Information Literacy Subject Matter Specialist (SME) group was formed in 2011 and trained as information literacy expertise to assist Information Literacy Programmes. The group was exposed to the effective techniques of information retrieval and detection. Their responsibility includes facilitating information literacy participants to require knowledge in information literacy.

Media and Information Literacy Module
Media and Information Literacy Module was launched in December 2011 by the Deputy Minister of Information Communication and Culture, Malaysia. The module is divided into basic, intermediate and advanced level and being used by the National Library of Malaysia to conduct its Media and Information Workshop. The module aims to expose the public to skills in searching, managing and using printed information sources or the electronic media.

Information Packaging Services
National Library of Malaysia affords user information projects packaging services especially for school students based on school project and current issues. The same information packaging can be access online via the Digital Information Package module in the i-Pakar database.

Content Development
National Library of Malaysia continued the library collection digitalization activities to provide fast and easier access for user. A total of 782 copies which is equivalent to 102,664 pages of library materials were converted to digital format, comprising rare books, Malays manuscripts, media resources materials and newspaper articles. The overall total of digitalized library collection stands at 48,034 titles or 766,042 pages in 2012.
PNM Digital Portal
National Library of Malaysia has developed PNM Digital Portal consist of electronic resources and information databases in accordance with the advance of technology devices. There are 15 databases that have been subscribed for users, such as Encyclopedia Britannica Online (Library Edition), World E-Book Library, Credo Reference, EBSCO, Ebrary, BERNAMA Library and Infolink Service (BLIS), Overdrive, Zinio, Library Pressdisplay, Emerald, Data IG Library, Score A Programme, Morrieland, Lawnet and NSTP E-Media. It can be access onsite and/or remote location by using Identity Card (IC) number.

i-Pakar Database
i-Pakar Database stores information packaging and selected brief references via online for the purpose of reference, research and learning. With high demand of user, the database is in the process of transferring to a new database for effective accessibility.

Library Collection Digitalization Policy and Guidelines
Library Collection Digitalization Policy and Guidelines has been published in 2012 as guidelines and references for all libraries in Malaysia. The objectives of Library Collection Digitalization Policy include:
- To simplify and as expeditious access to various library collections at anytime anywhere.
- To capture the attention of newly user the availability of library collections via online.

Workshop/ Training/ Refresher Course
National Library of Malaysia organize and conduct workshop/ training/ refresher course for information literacy as follows.
- Training of Trainers Workshop on Media and Information Literacy for Librarians in Malaysia was carried out from 22-24 November 2011.
- The Information Literacy Workshop for the Information Consultant Group was carried out in 26 November 2010 and attended by 18 officers that were appointed as Information Literacy Subject Matter Specialist (SME) group.
- National Library of Malaysia also organized refresher course relating to electronic resource information searching for National Library of Malaysia personnel.

Information Literacy Programmes
National Library of Malaysia has been playing an important role in information literacy programmes as stated below:
- Media and Information Literacy Programmes
Community Outreach Programmes were given a new approach as Information Literacy Programmes in 2010. It provides training on information skills especially the searching and retrieving techniques.

The Outreach Programme: “Bengkel Teknik Pencarian dan Pemakejan Maklumat” was initiated with the selection of three (3) secondary schools in six (6) readily available communities as pioneer projects. All three pioneer projects have proven to be very popular with tremendous response. Among the activities are information literacy skills hands-on excercise, quiz dan group activities.
In the year of 2011 and 2012 the Media and Information Literacy Programmes has moved forward at a larger scale by collaborating with MSD Digital Intelligence Sdn. Bhd, Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung (GPMS) and Berita Harian where it covers selected schools throughout Malaysia.

- **User Education Programme**
  The purpose of User Education Programme is to expose participants to reference sources and methods to access information available in National Library of Malaysia. Participants from secondary schools students and several other institutions in Klang Valley take part in the user education programme. Implementation techniques include briefing, quiz and visit to various divisions such as The Centre for Malay Manuscript, Malaysiana Information Centre and Preservation Division.

- **e-Teroka**
  The purpose of e-Teroka is to promote and to encourage the use of electronic and digital resources among National Library user. Implementation techniques include information literacy skills hands-on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Media and Information Literacy</th>
<th>User Education</th>
<th>e-Teroka</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>1,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3,187</td>
<td>930</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,793</td>
<td>2,802</td>
<td>2,562</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Implemented Information Literacy Programmes in National Library of Malaysia*

**Reading Promotion Programmes**
National Library of Malaysia has implemented many types of programmes to inculcate reading habit among Malaysian. The programmes and activities that are carry out involving various locations, ethnicities and religions and received support and good response from the public. Among the programmes and activities conducted as stated below:

- Suitable activities aim for the purpose of encouraging reading habit among Malaysian.
- Activities are aim to the least opportunity group to develop interest in reading.
- The aim of this activity is to make reading as fun activities for pediatrics patient.
- Promoting reading habit by setting up a reading corner in railway train and ferry
**Schools**

Information literacy is acknowledged within Malaysian education system. The former Minister of Education’s speech in International Association School Librarianship (IASL) 2002 Conference stated that several measures have been implemented to promote and enhance the reading culture in schools as part of information literacy education. With the introduction of Malaysia Smart School System (MSS), the new system stresses integrating information and communication technology into education as an enabler, teaching and learning tools, and the enhancement of efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of management in education. It is critical that school librarians, teacher librarians, or media coordinators, as important stakeholders in the Malaysian Smart School, help promote the Smart Schools as a vehicle for the realization of the goals of information literacy in schools (Saidatul, Dorner, Oliver, 2011).

The Smart School Flagship was one of the seven applications identified under the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) initiative, which envisages the creation of high-value jobs in the country, achieving high and consistent growth driven by exports, improving national productivity and competitiveness and achieving value creation.

Many secondary schools in Malaysia are more aware of information literacy concept. Education Technology Division (ETD) or Bahagian Teknologi Pendidikan, Ministry of Education plays an important role in information literacy. The Education Technology Division (ETD) has produced an Information Skills Guidelines for all school library and media teacher in Malaysia as a proper training guideline for information literacy. The guideline consists of six (6) modules as below:

- Identified information needs
- Searching strategies
- Use of Information
- Organizing information
- Dissemination of information
- Evaluating of information

According to Education Technology Division, information literacy has been taught in Malaysian school curriculum in various ways such as:

- School project paper
- Class activities
- Co-curriculum activities
- Independent study
- Reading program

As an example, the school project paper such as Kajian Sejarah Tempatan (KST) gives the opportunity for students to experience the way of conducting a research, expose students to information searching, gathering and analyzing skills, as well as to instill students’ interest towards History subject. The importance of history placed by the Kajian Sejarah Tempatan in the learning context of the Malaysian Secondary School Curriculum is in line with information literacy practices “to develop research and learning skills” (Abd Rahim, 2000).
State Libraries

Harding, 2008 stated that “the public libraries are the ideal place and have capabilities to manage information development and help users learned to find, use and evaluate information. Public library also plays an important role in bridging the digital divide between those who have access to the internet and those who don't have internet access.”

Horng-Ji Lai, 2011 stated that “public library are the organization that support lifelong learning and have the ability to bridging the digital divide by offering free internet access and training to increase information literacy competency.”

According to the observation of state library official website in Malaysia and interview of person in charged, most of it has Information Literacy Unit under their information services activities. The public libraries offers information literacy skills programme to all their registered and non-registered members including students and adults.

The implementation of every information literacy programs are quite similar and usually been conducted during school holidays. Among the activities were user educations, information literacy workshop and reading campaign.

There is also public library that has information literacy module which categorized into three (3) segment; foundation, intermediate and advanced module and the topics covered of both printed and non-printed materials.

Academic Libraries

In Malaysia, most of the academic libraries, especially university libraries, have taken initiatives to enhance their students’ information skills. The nature and extent of the initiatives however varies, with some being compulsory structured courses while others are voluntary sessions. The objective of these programmes is similar; it is to developed students with appropriate competencies and skills for information management. This is to enable the students to have the ability to recognize their needs of information, having the knowledge on how to locate the information, retrieve, and use the information that they had obtained.

Mohd Sharif, N.N. Edzan and A. N. Zainab (2005) in their paper reported that various assessment methods have been used in public universities for their information literacy courses. In Malaysia, university libraries have been conducting, in one way or other, courses under the umbrella of information literacy (Che Norma, 2004, and Juhana, 2000). These courses can be categorized as:

- Orientation for all new undergraduates/post graduates,
- Optional Information skills programme for final year undergraduates,
- Specialized information skills programme such as use of databases and internet searching skills,
- Compulsory Information literacy / skills courses which are accorded academic credits,
- Information literacy course accorded credits at the same level as other electives under co curriculum.

At the completion of the programme, students’ feedback is collected through an evaluation form. Only the courses conducted to earn credits are evaluated from the students’ ability to perform certain tasks through tests, work sheets, and final exams.
A study on initiatives in providing information literacy programme involving five universities in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (University of Malaya, National University of Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi MARA) was done in 2002. The research examined the objectives, course content and methodology used in information literacy. The initiatives were conducted at different levels and can be divided into 4 major categories:

• Orientation for first year students - Introduction of the library services and facilities.

• Sequence of continuing information literacy/skills course - Library teaches the information and library resources searching. Sessions are in the form of lecturers and hands-on exercise. These courses can be requested by academicians or are offered by the library.

• Sequence of continuing information literacy/skills course (course integrated) - Library and faculty cooperate to integrate information literacy/skills into faculty courses such as research methodology which involves the ability to search for information in both print and electronic format. These courses are designed with the help of faculty members to ensure relevance and appropriateness. The sessions consist of lectures, hands-on exercises, assignments and projects.

• Information literacy skill course (credit hour-compulsory or co-curricular option) - The library offers a 1-2 credit hour information literacy course for a period of one semester. Teaching methods includes lecturers and hands-on with exercises, assignments, tests, and final exam. Only University of Malaya (UM) offers it as compulsory but other universities offer it as a co-curricular or optional course for the undergraduates. Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) offers the information literacy course as an optional credit hour course. National University of Malaysia (UKM) offers it as a co-curricular program.

(Mohd. Sharif and Zainab, 2002)

Polytechnic

In Malaysia, polytechnic library plays a vital role to create and develop self-reliance students in terms of information searching skills. A basic survey by the National Library of Malaysia indicates that polytechnic library organized and conduct information literacy programme actively. The polytechnic library continues to market its information literacy classes to staff and students to achieve information literate students.

Students are exposed and always have access to a strong information literacy programme, conduct by polytechnic library. The purpose of the information literacy programme is to assist patrons to use all its resources, services and facilities to their fullest. The information literacy programme consist this module:

• Introduction to printed and non printed materials
• Accessing the Library’s Online Public Access Catalogue and library’s electronic resources
• Evaluating information from printed and non printed materials
• Information packaging
• Legal and ethical of information used
Implementation of information literacy programme, conduct by polytechnic library includes workshop and hands-on session. It is conducted all year with the frequency of two (2) to ten (10) classes per year. The targeted audience is students, lecturers and staff.

**Other institution**

Other institution that involves in promoting and cultivating information literacy in Malaysia is Librarians Association of Malaysia or known as PPM. Under Academic Committee, they promote the use of information technology in library services focusing on the information literacy programs among academic library users.

**ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN MALAYSIA**

The level of information literacy among student in Malaysia was moderate. Szarina Abdullah, Nor Rashimahwati Tarmuchi, Norliya Ahmad Kassim, Rasmah Aripin & Mohd Sharif Mohd Saad (2005) stated that information literacy level among students in public and private university in Malaysia showed that 50.1% of the students are at the intermediate level while 38.4% are beginners and 11.5% can be categorized as at the advanced competency level.

The development of information skills and competencies of students especially at higher level of education are still lack. According to Rosmah Ali, Norihan Abu-Hassan, Mohd Yusof Md Daud & Kamaruzaman Jusoff (2010), information literacy competency showed that UPM engineering students need to improve on identifying the most efficient search strategy, evaluating internet information and websites, as well as using information ethically. Without information literacy, it may result to the lack of awareness among students on importance developing good information skills.

The level of information literacy among Malaysian society are not really satisfied. Yazid (2012) in his study indicated that information literacy skills among National Library user showed that their information skills are low, especially in terms of basic elements of information searching, evaluation and awareness of legal and ethical used of information.

These studies indicate that information literacy skills are essentially needed to develop good information skills. This information literacy skill is the core of locating, evaluating and using information effectively and ethically.

**Information Literacy in School Curriculum**

Information literacy should be introduced from a very tender age and continue to a higher institution level. Saidatul, Dorner, Oliver 2011 raised the issue of exam-oriented education in Malaysia that did not include information literacy as part of examination questions. The students are not require to acquire information literacy skills in order to achieve top results in exams.

The issue of information literacy in the context of general education was also touched in 31st Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship incorporating
the 6th International Forum on Research in School Libraries in 2002. Minister of Education, Tan Sri Dato’ Musa Mohamad, outlined several measures that have been implemented to promote and enhance reading culture in schools. One of these measures is “reading and information literacy courses for state resource centre personnel to expose them to effective reading and information skills for them to carry out such courses in localized situations” (Musa 2002).

Students should be taught the difference between fact and opinion, and be able to distinguish between information, entertainment, and persuasion. They should learn that all information has its own source and that knowing the source, and its biases, is important to understand any information.

It is suggested that information literacy should be the main agenda in school and integrated into the school curriculum as part of a subject or as a subject itself in order to inculcate information literacy among students. To date, information literacy and reading program is not properly teach at school.

Datuk Prof. Dr. Raja Abdullah Yaacob stated that school libraries should be managed by professional librarian to increase information literacy among students. This is to ensure that student have the ability to manage information ethically and avoiding ‘cut and paste’ syndrome.

**Official standards and policies**

The development of information literacy in Malaysia is relatively slow. It is crucial to develop official standards and policies as guidelines to all libraries and institution in Malaysia.

There is a need to have a clearer vision and a blueprint to make information literacy programmes acceptable and feasible to students, teachers, academics, administrators and policy makers. There is a need to formulate a National Information Literacy Agenda (NILA) which could be used to plan, implement and evaluate information literacy programs. NILA will be able to provide a framework that will include the principles, standards and practices that will support information literacy education in all sectors. All parties or stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved with any form of information literacy initiatives at any level must come together and establish NILA and a task group must be form to implement this. (N.N. Edzan, Mohd. Shariff, 2005).

The committee should consist the representative from The Ministry of Education to represent the schools, the Ministry of Higher Education to represent higher institutions, the National Library of Malaysia and the Malaysian Librarians’ Association. It can also include representative of other libraries such as public libraries and also private institution that have responsibility for the delivery of information literacy programmes.

**Training**

Lack of training is a main constrains to develop information literacy in Malaysia. Information literacy skills need to be developed and train. It is the skills that require the ability to manage information effectively.
The (ETD) of the (MoE) reported, in the issue of staff training, that there were only 30% of teachers in schools were exposed to seminars or courses or other staff development programs in information literacy. The other 70% of teachers were untrained in information literacy (Education Technology Division, 2006). This evidence supported by the research done by Tan S.M. and D. Singh (2006) study showed that 76.2% of media teachers were aware of the concept of information literacy.

However, 60% of them said that they had not been exposed or trained in information literacy. Furthermore, the time allocated for implementing information literacy in most schools was limited to less than 10% of the teachers’ teaching time. The same research study showed that almost 70% of all the respondents had not been exposed and trained in information literacy through courses, seminars or other structured staff development program.

5. CONCLUSION

Information explosion era has changed the way people received, processed and stored information. It also creates new information or knowledge and the way of communicating this information to others.

To develop a society that has the ability to create, innovate, and generate ideas need information literacy skill. Information literacy also play a vital role to develope the information literate society. Information literate society need human capital that have the ability to transform information to a new knowledge that can generate income and contribute to the national harmony.

References


