LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE TRENDS IN MALAYSIA - COUNTRY REPORT *

by

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ABSTRAK


INTRODUCTION

Malaysia consists of Peninsular Malaysia and the states of Sabah and Sarawak on the Borneo Island. It is located at the heart of Southeast Asia, to the north is Thailand, to the south are Singapore and Indonesia, to the east is the Philippines. Malaysia has a total area of about 330,434 sq. km. and a population of about 18 million. Malaysia is a member of ASEAN (Association of South East Asia Nation). Some examples of library cooperation among libraries in ASEAN countries are, ASEAN-COCI, Joint Congress of Library Association of Singapore and Library Association of Malaysia and Conference of Southeast ASEAN Librarians (CONSAL). At the same time, many libraries especially special libraries, have established bilateral linkages with their counterparts in Southeast Asian countries based on mutual interests.

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LIBRARIES IN MALAYSIA

1) The National Library
The National Library of Malaysia was established in 1966 as a Unit within the National Archives and its primary function then was to implement the *Preservation of Books Act, 1966* and to publish the *Malaysian National Bibliography*. The *National Library Act* was passed in 1972. Its Reference Division was first opened to the public in the same year. The *Preservation of Books Act* was repealed and a new act named the *Deposit of Library Materials Act* was enacted in 1986. This Act, named the National library as the National Depository Center for library materials published in the country. Library materials as defined in the Act includes printed as well as non printed materials, such as cinematograph films, microforms, phonorecords, video and audio recordings and other electronic media. The Act requires all publishers to deposit 5 copies of printed materials and 2 copies of non-printed materials in the National Library.

The National Library is one of the major libraries in Malaysia, which has its powers and roles clearly defined in the *National Library (Amendment) Act, 1987*. Presently the National Library is managed by the Director General and assisted by the Deputy Director General. The reorganization of the National Library’s organizational structure was recently approved by the government. The National Library consists of 15 Divisions, headed by 9 Directors and 6 Senior Librarians. The role of the National Library as the coordinator responsible for the strengthening of information infrastructure within the nation is stipulated in the 1987 Act. The Act empowers the Director General of the National Library "to advise the Minister on national policy on all matters pertaining to libraries and all other matters relating to libraries" and "to advise and assist in the national planning and development of libraries".

At present the National Library has a total collection of approximately 900,000 items, an increase of approximately 45,000 items annually. About 48,000 items of its total collection consist of multi media materials which includes video tapes, cassettes, microforms and CD-ROMs. Its new building which has a total area of about 22,700 sq. meters has modern facilities, including a multimedia resource centre, a computer centre, a computer training laboratory for training of library personnel to develop skills in managing information technology, a Computer Assisted Reference Service (CARS) Centre and a Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) Centre for the public to learn to access its databases through its Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Its children's library will be equipped with hypermedia services to enable children to learn within an IT environment. This Centre will be made possible, by the donation of Syarikat Esso (M) Bhd, which is celebrating its 100 years anniversary this year. We believe that the children of today who will be our future leaders, will be active users of library and information services of the future.

2) Academic Libraries
There are 7 university libraries in Malaysia namely the *Universiti Malaya* (University of Malaya), *Universiti Sains Malaysia* (University of Science), *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (National University of Malaysia), *Universiti Pertanian Malaysia* (University of Agriculture Malaysia), *Universiti Teknologi Malaysia* (University of Technology Malaysia), *Universiti Islam Antarabangsa* (International Islamic University) and most recent the *Universiti Malaysia, Sarawak*. The university libraries' collections are of varying sizes ranging from more than 1 million to less than 100,000 library materials. The *Universiti Malaysia Sarawak's* library is in a developmental stage. Except for the two newer libraries, all university libraries have their own network outside their main
campuses. Most of the major universities have computerized and have built up a number of databases and have access to foreign databases. Coordination among university libraries and the National Library is formalized through PERPUN (Conference of Chief Librarians of University libraries and the Director General of the National Library) which meet 3 to 4 times a year. Other forms of cooperation are in the area of document delivery services, microfilming activities SCOM (ie. Sub-Committee on Microfilming which involves sharing responsibilities in microfilming projects), planning for bibliographic networks, organizing training and conferences.

There are about 70 academic libraries in various institutes of higher learning either as government owned or as a private organizations. In recent years, there are a number of private colleges that have been set up with twinning programmes with foreign universities. These colleges have their mini libraries of various sizes, some are managed by professional librarians whilst others are managed by a non professional staff.

3) Special Libraries
Special libraries were the earliest libraries established in Malaysia mainly to support research in related areas. The oldest libraries in Malaysia are the Institute of Medical Research Library (1901), the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia (1925) and the Forest Research Institute (1929). Today there are more than 300 special libraries of varying sizes attached to various research institutions, Ministries, Government Departments and private corporations.

Special libraries in the Ministries and the Federal Government Departments are administered under their respective Ministries and Heads of Departments, while special libraries in research institutions and private corporations are administered under their respective Directors of institutions or Chief Executives of Corporations. However, librarians and library assistants working in the Ministries and the Federal Government Departments fall under the purview of the Common User Scheme for libraries administered by the National Library of Malaysia. Whilst there are 256 libraries under the Scheme, only 45 libraries are headed by professional librarians. There are about 156 special libraries in research institutions, private corporations and associations. Most special libraries in research institutions or semi government institutions such as in the Banking sectors, are headed by professional librarians or information specialists.

As head of the Common User Scheme for libraries, the National Library is responsible for the recruitment, placement, transfer, confirmation and promotion, training and professional development of all librarians and library assistants in the Ministries and Federal Government departments. The National Library conducts regular training programmes as well as examinations, for the purpose of confirmation of newly recruited librarians and library assistants in the scheme. However, trainings and seminars organised by the National Library, especially in the area of new disciplines, where local and foreign experts are invited to conduct the training programmes or seminars, are opened to all library professionals in the country. The National Library provides advisory services to any institution intending to set up new libraries or to upgrade its library services.

4) Public Libraries
All State Public Libraries in Peninsular Malaysia are under the administration of the State Public Library Corporation Boards except for the Sabah State Library which is a State Department under the Ministry of Social Services, while the Sarawak Public Library is under the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The Enactments of
State Public Library Corporations, were passed by their respective State Legislations, in the years beginning from 1969 to late 1980s.

The State Public Library of each state is responsible for developing state-wide library networks which include setting up branch libraries, village libraries and reading rooms in various districts and towns and providing mobile library services in the rural areas. At present there are 13 state libraries, 76 branch libraries, 145 village libraries and 75 mobile libraries in Malaysia. In 1993, the government allocated funds for the National Library, to set up an additional 21 village libraries and 10 mobile libraries. The Kuala Lumpur City Council has set up 3 city libraries and a mobile library unit to provide library services in urban centers within the Federal Territory. There are also state local authorities such as Johore Bharu, Pulau Pinang, Kuching and Ipoh that have set up their own city/town libraries managed by their respective local authorities. In addition, there are about 473 mini rural libraries or reading rooms under the management of local authorities, Community Development Division of the Ministry of Rural Development (KEMAS), the Rubber Industry Small Holders Development Authority (RISDA) and the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA).

The National Library provides development grants to the state authorities to assist the state in the development and strengthening of public library infrastructure within the state. This development grant is for building of new libraries, renovation of library premises, purchase of mobile buses, library equipment, books and non book materials for collection building and provision of launching grant. Under the Sixth Malaysian Plan a total sum of RM19.948 million has been allocated for the state public library development. The Director General of the National Library sits in all State Public Library Board Meetings. Professional meetings with the state public libraries organized by the National Library of Malaysia, are held twice a year, mainly to coordinate professional matters and to monitor development projects.

5) School Libraries
There are resource centres or libraries of varying sizes in most secondary and primary schools in Malaysia. The Technology Division of the Ministry of Education is responsible for promoting and facilitating the establishment of resource centres in all schools. School libraries are managed by teacher librarians with special library training. The Specialist Teachers Training Institute in Kedah provides special courses for teacher librarians in the country.

6) Training of Library Professional
There are 2 library schools in Malaysia, namely the Mara Institute of Technology, which provides degree and post graduate diploma courses and the International Islamic University which provides a Masters programme in Information Management. The Library Association of Malaysia also conducts courses and organizes seminars on library management and organization.

CHANGING PATTERN OF LIBRARIES IN MALAYSIA

The developments that are taking place at the national and international arenas have a major impact on library development in Malaysia.

At national level, there are government policies and programmes introduced recently that will have major impact on all libraries in Malaysia. Plans for future library development should take into consideration some of these policies and programmes, namely, the Malaysian 30-year plan or Malaysia the way forward commonly known as Vision 2020: the 10-Year Plan or Second Outline Perspective Plan (OPP2) and the 5-Year-Plan (Sixth Malaysia Plan). These
Policies will provide the major thrust for libraries in Malaysia to move ahead towards the twentieth century. Other policies which are equally as important for library development are the National Policy on Library and Information Services, the National Book Policy (Dasar Buku Negara), the National Science and Technology Policy, the Industrial Master Plan and the National Agriculture Policy.

The National Development Policy has formalised the vision 2020, which sets the pace for Malaysia to become a fully industrialised and developed nation by the year 2020 and to be an information rich nation. Its main objectives is to build a progressive, prosperous and united nation. In order to be a successfull nation by the year 2020, there are 9 strategic challenges that should be overcome by all Malaysian. These nine challenges are: (a) establishing a united Malaysian Nation; (b) creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society; (c) fostering and developing a mature democratic society; (d) establishing a fully moral and ethical society; (e) establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society; (f) establishing a scientific and progressive society; (g) establishing a fully caring society; (h) ensuring an economically just society, in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of wealth of the nation, and; (i) establishing a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient. To meet these challenges, information becomes a critical factor, in order to excel and to have an edge over others. Thus libraries as the major information providers in the country, should play its strategic role as an agent of change, towards meeting the information needs of the future.

At the international level, the developments that are taking place will certainly affect library services in Malaysia. As the world economy is becoming more competitive, information too is becoming a major asset to any nation that is committed toward change. For any country to have a competitive advantage, it must have a good information system that can deliver information fast for decision makers. Advancement of computer technologies have made it possible for libraries to utilize its potential as working tools to create variety of databases that are pertinent to library users. Future direction of library development in Malaysia should take into consideration the external environment i.e changes that are taking place globally especially within the Pacific rim as well as the future development in Malaysia, taking into consideration government policies and programmes. This is a challenge for all of us librarians in Malaysia.

In line with the above policies and the globalization that are taking place, all libraries in Malaysia have a major role to play in the development and strengthening of library and information infrastructure within the nation. In order to meet the future challenge of becoming a developed industrial nation, all libraries in Malaysia, be it academic, special, public or school libraries, should become an integral part of the nation's information system that provide research and reading materials to the public through its services. The collections of all these libraries are part of the nation's major resources and assets which should be shared by all. All Malaysians be they, in the urban or rural areas, should have access to research and reading materials, in order to forge ahead as a productive, innovative and skilled labour force. To develop an information-rich society, Malaysia needs a Plan of Action for the development of library and information services within the country. Some of the strategies for the development of library and information services in Malaysia, includes:

a) strengthening of library and information infrastructure in the country by setting up more libraries in the cities, towns and villages so that all Malaysian will be
able to enjoy library facilities and services;
b) reducing imbalance of library development among the states by providing additional financial assistance to the state authorities responsible for public library development, in order to enable all states to provide effective library services and to establish state-wide library networks. In addition to the development grant given to the states, beginning from 1992, the Federal government, through the National Library is subsidising half of the annual budget of the state public libraries, on a 50:50 ratio. Thus, it is envisaged that a balanced library development within the states will prevail in the near future;
c) ensuring all public libraries in the country achieve minimum standard of services, so that it can function as a one stop community information centre for local information, and functions as state reference and referral centres. Thus, the state libraries will develop as "centre of excellence" for the state information system. Public Libraries should be the major learning center for the youth to upgrade their living skills and to improve their standard of living through continuous education and self learning;
d) facilitating the development of special libraries and specialised information centres in the Ministries, Federal Departments, Research Institutions and private corporations, both in the areas of science and technology and the areas of social sciences, so that they would be a specialised centre of excellence in their respective related disciplines, as part of the national information system.
e) ensuring that all libraries within the country have access to computer facilities in order to build up bibliographic as well as non-bibliographic databases pertaining to their local environment. These databases should be made accessible to the public through online library services and networks. Thus libraries will become an intermediary between its users and different types of databases;
t) establishing a national bibliographic database and national bibliographic network in a distributed environment. This is in line with the governments' policy to have an "open system" environment for all public sector computer systems;
g) ensuring national availability of publications to the researchers and the public who will have access to the collections of all libraries in the country through effective document delivery services. With the assistance of the Syarikat Telekom Malaysia Bhd, the National Library is planning to link up all libraries that have signed the "Memorandum of Understanding" for telemail services;
h) all libraries will be actively involved in reading campaigns and user education programmes, in order to ensure that library users will be able to exploit information to meet the challenges of a new industrial society. The National Library's mission is to instill the culture of excellence amongst Malaysians, by encouraging them to continuously acquire knowledge through library services. As a secretariat of the National Reading Campaign chaired by the Minister of Education, the National Library is coordinating and assisting relevant authorities to organize and campaign for the reading programme. A National Reading Month will be observed annually.
i) all libraries will work with other
institutions to formulate the National Plan of Action to produce more reading and research materials for the Malaysian reading society;

j) establishing within the National Library a National Reference and Referral Centre for local imprints, as well as, sources of information on Malaysia. This will include an online system which will allow the public and the publishers to access the Malaysian National Bibliography database, thus acting as the "national focal point" for a Malaysian information system;

k) library services may not be purely bibliographic but include textual, graphic and statistical information. Library services will include repackaging of information in accordance to the users needs. A marketing approach to the library services will be emphasised. The corporate culture of libraries as a knowledge-based institution should be customer driven i.e libraries exist to satisfy the information needs of users;

l) in line with the government policy of promoting the excellence culture amongst all government departments, library services too should achieve services par excellence by providing timely and quality information required by decision makers, researchers and the public. All libraries should develop corporate plans with short term and long term plans for the future, in order to forge ahead to the year 2000 and beyond.

m) establishing standards for all library activities and services of libraries in order to upgrade the quality of library services. A Total Quality Management approach should be practised by all libraries in Malaysia;

n) intensifying in-service training for professionals librarians and non-professionals staff in order to meet new challenges, especially in terms of exploiting and harnessing global information by using new technologies and developing subject specialization among librarians.

**LIBRARY AUTOMATION**

Automation among libraries in Malaysia began as early as 1978 when the MALMARC project was started. The MALMARC project was a centralized batch processing system for copy cataloguing and for building up a union catalogue database among consortia libraries consisting of the Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Utara Malaysia and the National Library. The successful output of MALMARC was the creation of one of the largest bibliographic databases, consisting of approximately 480,000 records of a union catalogue of consortia libraries. The institutional files from the MALMARC database can be loaded into any integrated library system with minor customization thus facilitating the implementation process of the computerization programme of consortia libraries. In 1990 this project was discontinued and currently plan for the future bibliographic network is underway.

Since the 1980s, libraries especially academic and special libraries began to acquire their own computer systems. Currently there are a variety of computerized library systems being used in different libraries in Malaysia. The University Science library and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia are using the DOBIS/LIBIS system, the University Malaya library the ATLAS system, the University of Technology Malaysia is using Dynix system, the Universiti Utara Malaysia is using SISPUKOM, the University of Agriculture and the National Library are using VTLS. Some special libraries are using VTLS,
such as MINISIS and CDS/ISIS for simple text retrieval systems. For the last three years, the National Library has developed 5 major databases namely Binar consisting of approximately 171,440 records on library holdings; Pancaran consisting of approximately 3,310 indexing records of conference/ seminar proceedings; Mentari consisting of approximately 39,480 index records of Malaysian periodical/journal articles; Suria consisting of approximately 109,830 records of index to Malaysian major newspapers.

The first phase of library networking is to allow libraries with similar systems to be connected and be able to access each other's databases. The second phase is to consider the introduction of "disc spinder" i.e. an independent computer system either to be installed at the National Library or by appointing a commercial bureau for the establishment of centralized union catalogue of library holdings. The method was introduced by Dr John Ashford, who undertook the consultancy study for bibliographic networks in Malaysia, under British Council sponsorship.

Since 1985, libraries in Malaysia began to have access to commercial databases such as Patent and Standards databases or SIRIMLINK and Livebases as well as international databases such as Dialog Information Services. Most libraries in Malaysia are now beginning to build up their CD-ROM collections. In future, library online services should not limit to accessing bibliographic databases, but should also consider accessing textual, and statistical databases, directories, financial data, community information services, and many other databases in order to repackage the information retrieved from different databases, in accordance with specified users needs. Thus there is value added to the information we deliver to our users. This is a challenge for all librarians. How do we develop the required skills among us to access different databases with different kinds of search.

**IMPLICATIONS TO LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS**

We are living in an information age where publications and databases which contain all forms of information proliferate in different types of media. Information published in multimedia and hypermedia should be an integrated part of our library collection and library services. Libraries of the future should not only be library of printed materials but also library of different databases and multimedia resources. Advancements in computer technology has affected our life and our work place. The convergence of computers and sophisticated telecommunication system make it possible to exchange information worldwide in an instant. Thus we will be able to access various form of online databases worldwide through different networks. As information providers, these developments will have implications for our professions. It requires different approaches to accessing and deliver information to our users. Accessing different types of databases will be a daily routine work of any modern library. As librarians, we are responsible for selecting information, relevant to our respective user needs, processing mem in the most systematic manner, in accordance with national and international standards, for the purpose of future exchange of information, developing retrieval information systems that are responsive to our user's needs. On the other hand, our users, endowed with different intellectual skills, multi disciplinary background, computer literacy and globalized outlooks, are becoming more sophisticated and demanding for quality and efficiency library services.

How do we librarians cope with such situations? If we librarians are to play the role as a change agent in our society, we should be proactive in our approach in providing library services and marketing our products and services. We should be constantly anticipating changes that are likely
to occur and to position our human resources to address these new challenges effectively. As library managers, we should be innovative and efficient in utilizing our resources which include library materials and human resources. This is an important task for librarians to undertake especially when we are living in a changing environment where rapid development is taking place in this technological world. Library management and services should take new approaches, namely strategic management and planning approach in order to forecast the future and determining various alternatives measures to introduce innovative and quality library and information services. SWOT analysis approach is one way to understand our present strength and weakness. We should analysis our libraries in term of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, in order to make optimum use of our strengths, and reduce weakness so that we would be able to take advantage of the new opportunities ahead of us, thereby reducing any threats to our profession. Libraries should treat information as commodities, which are marketable to library users. By analyzing the internal and external environment, we should strengthen our distinctive competence and develop expertise, as centres of excellence in our own areas of competences.

The Pacific rim will be one of the fastest developing regions in this part of the world in terms of economic, social, scientific and industrial development in the near future. Thus libraries within the Pacific region cannot exist in isolation but need to cooperate. Though countries in Asean have varied background and in different pace of development, there is a common need among us, that is utilizing information for our national development. Expertise and experiences among librarians in Asean countries should be shared through various cooperation programmes such as twinning programme, strategic alliances, networking, etc.

It has been recognized that information is a major resource that will contribute towards the development of a progressive nation. In order to achieve a competitive advantage in this ever changing environment, the strategic role of information in national and international decision-making cannot be underestimated. Information should be regarded as a commodity or a major asset for any country that has an agenda for change. It is also commonly said that better decision making can be achieved through increased availability of information. However, the key issue here is how do we librarians deliver precise and quality information that is relevant to a particular user at a particular time. An overload of information or information inappropriately derived or combined can result in poor decisions that might be made in a less information rich environment. This will affect our image as information providers. Thus as information managers we should able to manage information effectively so that it does not overwhelm the decision makers and library users with irrelevant information.

Libraries should not only function as information and cultural centres, but should also be learning organizations where individual library staff are constantly learning and adapting and be innovative to meet the changing patterns of our users needs. We should nurture a learning culture among library staff so that they are receptive to change. We should not only encouraging our users to be learned but we ourself should be continuously learning and understand the globalization scenario so that we will be able to direct our resources in accordance with the needs of our current and potential users. As library managers we should consider the new approach to management. The new approach of business management is flattening up of the organizational structure. The tall pyramidal organization is disappearing. A new form of
organization must focus on customers' needs. In providing effective information services, the new organization should be in a form of cluster organizations. A cluster organization consists of a group of people drawn from different disciplines/divisions, working together on a semi-permanent basis with a mission to provide the best services to the customers. The cluster develops its own expertise, expresses strong customers oriented, pushes decision making towards the points of action, shares information and accepts accountability. Therefore, a cluster organization moves people beyond responsibility of their area and towards the performance of the cluster as a whole. A cluster approach of management benefits not only the organization but also the career of the individual involved.

Library as an organization should allow an integration of individual development, career development and organizational development. Organization cannot develop if individual staff do not acquire the appropriate knowledge, skills, competences and positive attitudes. Libraries as learning organizations should allow individual staff members to learn new roles, taking risks, acknowledge uncertainly and expand information boundaries. There should be open communication among managers and staff as well as close networking across divisional functions. As managers we should establish an environment that enables and empowers individuals to be productive, creative and innovative. The creation of an effective corporate climate within the library environment should be our prime concern. The library staff who have the necessary knowledge, skills and competences are our strategic resources. Thus we should continuously develop our staff by introducing various learning and training programmes so that our staff are constantly improving their knowledge, skills, competences and adopting appropriate attitudes and behaviours to provide efficient library services, in accordance with the changing demands of our users. Strategic management of strategic resources approach should be considered in order to make strategic investments that maximize the growth of human capital of librarians and library staff in this competitive environment. Thus strategic management of strategic resources should be part of our management style. Human resources development for librarians and information personnel should provide the necessary education and training that will enable librarians to play a new role in delivery of our products and services, i.e. information.

As librarians, our responsibilities are wide and diverse. Our tasks include promoting and inculcating reading habit, especially among the youths and children, inculcating reading and research work among our special clients, managing information sources available in multimedia as well as in different databases, developing effective information systems for a variety of users, formulating information policies and information standards and strengthening the information infrastructure within our respective countries. The task ahead is in reality a challenging one. However, with cooperation and strategic alliance our objective to make information available when needed will be achieved through effective resource sharing.

Demands for the future library services require librarians to reassess the kinds of services that librarians have provided to the user in the past and in present time. We should develop a close working relationship with other professionals outside our own boundaries and act as a "team player" with other professionals and be competent in the management of change.

The primary responsibility of librarians is to create a conducive environment which acts as a catalyst for improving information infrastructure for the economic growth of the nation. Librarians should be ever sensitive and
that provides information. All libraries should develop a strategic development plan that will cater for the information needs for the years 2000 and beyond.

REFERENCES

