

LIBRARIAN : The Profession

by

ROSLAN HASHIM*

ABSTRAK

Perubahan masa telah meletakkan pustakawan sebagai satu kerjaya yang mula dikenali ramai. Tugas pustakawan bukan sekadar memelihara bahan. Pustakawan harus mendalami isi kandungan perpustakaan dibawah penyeliaannya. Seterusnya pustakawan harus memanipulasi maklumat yang disimpan untuk meningkatkan keberkesanan perkhidmatan.

INTRODUCTION

The time has at last come when a librarian may, without assumption, speak of his occupation as a profession. And, more, a better time has come-perhaps we should say is coming, for it still has many fields to conquer. The best librarians are no longer men of merely negative virtues. They are positive, aggressive characters, standing in the front rank of the educators of their communities, side by side with the preachers and the teachers. The people are more and more getting their incentives and ideas from the printed page. There are more readers and fewer listeners, and men who move and lead the world are using the press more and the platform less. It needs no argument to prove that reading matter can be distributed better and more cheaply through lending libraries than in any other way, and we shall assume, what few will presume to dispute, that the largest influence over the people

is the printed page, and that this influence may be wielded most surely and strongly through our libraries.

DUTIES

From the first, libraries have commanded great respect, and much has been written of their priceless worth; but the opinion has been largely prevalent that a librarian was a keeper only, and had done his full duty of he preserved the books from loss, and to a reasonable extent from the worms. There have been noble exceptions to this rule. but still it is a modern idea that librarians should do more than this. It is not now enough that the books are cared for properly, are well arranged, are never lost. It is not enough if the librarian can readily produce any book asked for. It is not enough that he can, when asked, give advice as to the best books in his collection on any given subject. All these things are indispensable, but all these are not enough for our ideal.

* Librarian, MING College.

He must see that his library contains, as far as possible, the best books on the best subjects, regarding carefully the wants of his special community. Then, having the best books, he must create among his people, his pupils, a desire to read those books. He must put every facility in the way of readers, so that they shall be led on from good to better. He must teach the how, after studying their own wants, they may themselves select their reading wisely. Such a librarian will find enough who are ready to put themselves under his influence and direction, and, if competent and enthusiastic, he may soon largely the reading, and through it the thought, of his whole community.

The time is come when we are not astonished to find the ablest business talents engaged in the management of a public library. Not that we have less scholarship, but what we have more life. The passive has become active, and we look for a throng of people going in and out of library doors as in the markets and the stores. There was a time when libraries were opened only at intervals and visitors occasionally, as they come sometimes to a deserted castle or to a haunted house. Now many of our libraries are as accessible as our post offices, and the number of new libraries founded has been so great that in an ordinary town we no longer ask, "Have you a library?" but "Where is your library?" as we might ask where is your school-house, or your post office?

And so our leading educators have come to recognise the library sharing with the school the education of the people. The most that the schools can hope to do for the masses more than the schools are doing for them in many sections, is to teach them to read intelligently, to get ideas readily from the printed page. It may seem a strong statement, but many

children leave the schools without this ability. They can repeat the words of the book, but this is simply pronunciation, as a beginner pronounces another language was getting any clear idea of the meaning. Could the schools really teach the masses to read, they would be doing a great work. The children of the lower classes have to commence work at a very early age, and it is impossible to keep them in the schools long enough to educate them to any degree. The school teaches them to read; the library must supply them with reading which shall serve to educate, and so it is that we are forced to divide popular education into two parts of almost equal importance and deserving equal attention: the free school and the free library.

It is in the interest of the modern library, and of those desiring to make its influence wider and greater, that this journal has been established. Its founder have an intense faith in the future of our libraries, and believe that if the best methods can be applied by the best librarians, the public may soon be brought to recognise our claim that the free library ranks with the free school. We hold that there is no work reaching farther in its influence and deserving more honor than the work which a competent and earnest librarian can do for his community.

CONCLUSION

The time was when a library very like a museum, and a librarian was a mouser in musty books, and visitors looked with curious eyes at ancient tomes and manuscripts. The time is when a library is a school, and the librarian is in the highest sense a teacher, and the visitor is a reader among the books as a workman among his tools. Will any man deny to the high calling of such a librarianship the title of profession?