



**Thailand Conference on Reading 2011**



Organized by Thailand Knowledge Park (TK park), Office of Knowledge Management and Development

**Proceedings  
Thailand Conference on Reading 2011  
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At Amari Watergate Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand**

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## Preface

During the past two years some positive signs have emerged regarding the campaign to promote reading in Thailand. These include the announcement by the Thai government making reading a national agenda and the designation of the decade 2009 to 2118 as the decade for the promotion of reading.

This led to an awakening aimed at the development and improvement of public libraries as well as libraries in universities, colleges and other learning institutions, which includes the introduction of 3D libraries and electronic libraries. UNESCO has designated Bangkok as the World Book Capital 2013 and this will lead to a tangible promotion of reading amongst partners who work in the fields of books, reading promotion and learning sources development.

The Office of Thailand Knowledge Park (TK park) has decided to organize an academic conference in 2011 entitled Thailand Conference on Reading 2011 in order to encourage the exchange of knowledge on reading and the development of sources of learning. Apart from accommodating the current domestic context, the organizers also recognize the fast approaching goal of creating an ASEAN community in four years' time. Thailand thus needs to improve its knowledge and understanding of its neighbours, especially on the reading culture and reading promotion policies of other member states, which will serve as a starting point for learning as well as further promote collaboration amongst partner nations in the near future.

This 2011 Conference handbook contains reports and articles to be presented during the conference. It is hoped that the works of both Thai and foreign experts will help spark our minds and lead to debate and an exchange of views and the expansion of our knowledge as well as bringing about future practical benefits.

## **Thailand Knowledge Park**

Thailand Knowledge Park was founded in the hope of tackling one of the most important challenges of Thai society today. In a modern world with many distractions, most children turn out to be less interest in reading. They are not encouraged to either love reading or even see the importance of a library. In Thailand, most public libraries are lack of sufficient funding. With limited budget from the government and many obstacles in running and managing library, librarians in many public libraries are discouraging. Further difficulties such as the public who do not see or understand how a library could affect the lives as well as the general perception of a library, especially those in the rural areas, which sees it as just an quiet and old book warehouse that fails to attract any attention from the public trigger an idea to create a living library that would fit well within Thai context.

At first, Thailand Knowledge Park or TK park was conceptualized as an “experiment” to response to reading and library issues in Thailand and try to build a learning society with multiple levels in mind ranging from national, local, to individual matters. Supervised by the national policy with a support from the government, TK park has worked as a “missing link” to realize the key vision and to develop into a “prototype” living library in a form of a knowledge park which truly make an impact to the society.

On 24th January 2005 Thailand Knowledge Park was founded according to the principle and the hope of becoming a learning center with creative and modern atmosphere that are accessible to all with a mission to encourage reading habit, promote self-discovery learning and be more than just a library. TK park was conceived with inspiration from renowned learning centers across the world which is Bpi Public Information Library (Bibliothèque publique d’information), Pompidou Center, France;

Library Learning Information, UK; Sendai Mediatheque, Japan; Jurong Regional Library and Library@Orchard, Singapore. Through many processes and discussions as well as ideas sharing including focus groups in order to get to know the needs of our target group which are children and teenagers, we have finally emerged as a living library in form of a knowledge park.

From that day on, it has been more than six years that TK park has served its purpose for Thai society and create “resources” that generate “every place is a creative knowledge, idea, and imagination to children and learning space.” teenagers. We have been spreading the seeds of knowledge throughout the country in form of “living libraries” so that every place is a creative learning space.

## **1. Our Mission**

1.1 To develop knowledge, replicate the prototype Knowledge Park and promote the living libraries TK park has established different types of “living libraries” in order to support creative public learning and reading habit according to the local needs across Thailand. On the 8th floor of Central World Shopping Center in the heart of Bangkok, we have founded the Prototype Thailand Knowledge Park, which is a place for youth and anyone who loves reading and learning. With our wide range of creative activities incorporating books, music, and, multi-media, this Prototype Thailand Knowledge Park has become a place for creative expression and learning for all.

TK park has also initiated the replication of the prototype knowledge park in the regional and local levels in accordance with the local environment and contexts. For example, TK park has cooperated with Yala Province Municipal Office to establish “TK park Yala” the ‘Prototype Regional Knowledge Park’ in the form of a living library in order to expand the opportunities and access to reading and learning for

children and youth in the 5 southern provinces which are Yala, Pattani, Narathivas, Songkhla and Satun.

There are 5 types of the Prototype Regional Knowledge Park;

1. Provincial level (2,000 square meters and more) is a library cooperated with Province Municipal Office for the public in that province and nearby provinces.
2. Sub-district level (1,000 square meters and more) is a library cooperated with Sub-district Municipality and accessible for the locales and nearby communities.
3. Living Library in school (105 – 150 square meters or 1–3 classrooms) is a library that is adapted from a classroom for students in that school and nearby communities.
4. Thai Kid Library (50 – 150 square meters) is specific library for kids under 12 years old, a part of a larger learning center such as public library or school library.
5. TK Mobile Library is a project to expand an opportunity for children and youth especially underprivileged children can access to books and learning resources to encourage reading habit.

1.2 To develop prototype online learning community or Digital TK at [www.tkpark.or.th](http://www.tkpark.or.th)

In order to promote online learning, TK park has set up “Digital TK” at [www.tkpark.or.th](http://www.tkpark.or.th), which is accessible to everyone no matter where they are. Our online resources contain various contents and forms including Thai and English e-books, talking books and e-Learning that and be part of our “Online Learning Community”. Digital TK is also a virtual space for TK park’s very own iBook Writers Academy participants to showcase their talents through a bi-monthly online magazine “Read Me Egazine” which is conceptualized and created by them.

Since 2006, Digital TK website had 6,976,715 page views and 51,590 online members.

### **1.3 To develop prototype activities for creative public learning**

TK park provides the opportunities for children and youth to have a venue to display their creative power, as well as to exchange their experience with other people through creative activities in various spaces at TK park. We provide facility for the integration and development of learning skills through our learning activities and programs including arts and cultures exhibitions, skill trainings and IT workshops. The main objective is to promote and support the cultivation of the lifelong habit of reading and learning among Thai children, youth and members of the Thai society in general.

### **1.4 To help create a learning society in Thailand**

Working together with partners, TK park has created content, generate inspiration, knowledge and promote living library include Content Research and Development which compiles and transforms traditional Thai knowledge into different learning media in order to attract the interest of children and teenagers such as series of picture books and traditional children literature, creative games; Inspiring and Exchanging Knowledge as well as Passing on Knowledge on Living Library Managing through workshops, seminar, training such as “TK park Living Library Award and Training” and “Public Librarian Training”.

1. Knowledge Researches such as;

Reading Process for Primary School Students

A Research on Reading and Learning

Activities for Pre-Teenagers

A Research on Attitude and Behaviors of Thai People Towards Reading

Thai Comics Research: History, Status and Future

A Research on Thailand's Reading Policy Comparing to Other Countries

A Research on Thailand's Reading Issues and Index

## 2. Knowledge Exchanging, Experience Sharing, and Networking

Seminar: How to Encourage Thai Kids to be readers

Seminar: TK Opens the World of Children's Library

Seminar: Open the World of Reading with Picture Books

TK Forum on Reading Policy

## 3. TK park Living Library Award and Training

TK park Living Library Award and Training is held every two year in hope for sharing ideas and improving management skills for librarians. Each year, more than 200 libraries from across Thailand participating the event that gives out 10 awards to the outstanding libraries.

“From inquiries and following-ups with past participants, we have found that TK park Living Library Award and Training is proved to be truly beneficial to librarians. Many of the participants have applied the knowledge and experience they gained from the workshops to improve their own libraries which is resulted through the library's appearance, service, resources as well as the librarians themselves. There have also been some changes within the local communities of the awarded libraries. People start to notice and appreciate the importance of the library and begin to visit the library more often. Another significant impact is the dissemination of the concept of living library through the awarded librarians who have frequently received invitations to be guest speakers for other organizations. Consequently, there has been more awareness regarding living library in Thailand, for example there have been more library awards given by different organizations, awarded libraries gain more funding or it has become more likely for librarians to receive a sponsored study trip to neighboring countries”

#### 4. Librarians, Educational Supervisor and Library Manager Trainings

Working with the Office of the Basic Education Commission, TK park has organized trainings and workshops for school librarians and educational supervisors across Thailand every year since 2007 with more than 600 people participating.



## Background

One of the main missions of Thailand Knowledge Park (TK park) is to contribute to the building of a learning society. This can be achieved through developing learning sources under the concept of a “living library” and promotion of the love of reading, lifelong learning and creative thinking.

Continuously since 2005 TK park has organized an annual conference as part of efforts to push Thailand towards a creative learning society. The theme of the first conference in 2005 was “Enlivening Libraries” in 2006 was “Encouraging Thai Children to Read”, in 2007 was “Opening up the World of Children’s Libraries” and in 2008 was “Opening up the World of Reading with Stories”.

In 2009 TK park initiated the TK Forum, a public forum to share experiences among over 50 strategic partner organizations in utilizing and extracting their bodies of knowledge to push forward national reading promotion policies. The TK Forum in 2010 went beyond Thailand’s national boundaries, inviting many other countries, including Sweden, South Korea, and Japan, who have been successful in implementing reading policies, to share their experience.

This year TK park aims to use reading promotion as part of preparing Thai children to be quality citizens of the ASEAN Community in the next four years. The Thailand Conference on Reading 2011 hopes to serve as a pilot meeting, surveying different and common issues in the reading promotion policies of ASEAN countries in order to equip participants with multiple perspectives and viewpoints in an understanding of the different models and frameworks of best practices.

TK park hopes that this conference will not only expand horizons among ASEAN countries but also foster academic collaboration in developing learning and reading resources under the philosophy “Towards ASEAN Citizenship with Books and Reading.”

Programme  
**Thailand Conference on Reading 2011**  
**August 24-25, 2011**  
**Amari Watergate Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand**  
**Organized by Thailand Knowledge Park (TK park), Office of Knowledge**  
**Management and Development**

**Wednesday 24 August, 2011**

- 8:00-9:00 am Registration
- 9:00-9:15 am Opening Ceremony
- 9:15-9:45 am Special Lecture: **“Creative thinking through reading”** by **Mr. Narongchai Akrasenee**, Chair, Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD), Thailand
- 9:45-10:45 am Keynote Lecture: **“Libraries for Life: The Singapore National Library Board Experience”** by **Mrs. Kiang-Koh Lai Lin** Director, Reading Initiatives & Jasna Dhansukhlal, Senior Manager, Public Libraries Management, Singapore National Library Board
- 10:45-11:00 am Coffee/Tea Break
- 11:00-11:45 am **“How Malaysia Reads: Individual, School and Home Initiatives”** by **Professor Ambigapathy Pandian**, Dean, School of Language, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
- 11:45 am-12:30 pm **“The Development of Book Reading Activities to Promote a Better Life for Citizens in Vietnam”** by **Ms. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Mai**, Hanoi University of Culture
- 12:30-1:45 pm Lunch

- 1:45-2:30 pm **“Thailand’s Reading Promotion Policy: Overview, Challenges and Development Strategy”** by **Mrs.Pojjaman Pongpaiboon**, Director, Bureau of Educational Innovation Development, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education, Thailand
- 2:30-3:45 pm Panel Discussion: **“Gaps and Equity in Access to Books and Learning Sources: Experience from Lao PDR and Thailand”** by **Ms. Somphet Phongphachanh**, Country Director, Room To Read, Lao PDR, and **Mr. Chaiyosh Imsuwan**, Deputy Secretary-General, Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), Ministry of Education, Thailand
- 3:45-4:00 pm Coffee/Tea Break
- 4:00-5:00 pm Special Lecture **“Some Observations on Reading Promotion and Learning Processes in Thailand”** by **Mr. Krairit Boonyakiat**, Chair, Knowledge Management Professional Center Asia (KMPCA)

#### **Thursday 25 August, 2011**

- 9:00-9:15 am Video Presentation
- 9:15-9:45 am Special Lecture: **“Reading Habits of Thai people in a Cultural Dimension”** by **Professor Nidhi Eosewong**, Thailand
- 9:45-10:45 am Keynote Lecture: **“Bringing Books Alive for Children: Korea’s Reading Promotion Efforts”** by **Ms. Sook Hyeun Lee**, General Director, National Library for Children and Young Adults, Seoul, Republic of Korea
- 10:45-11:00 am Coffee/tea break
- 11:00-11:45 am **“The Myth of Illiterate Culture: the Case of Indonesian Children”** by **Associate Professor Setiono Sugiharto**, Atma Jaya Catholic University, Indonesia

- 11:45 am-12:30 pm **“Factors Affecting the Promotion of a Reading Culture in Thailand”**  
by **Associate Professor Aurasri Ngamwittayaphong**,  
Thammasat University, Thailand
- 12:30-1:45 pm Lunch
- 1:45-2:30 pm **“Every Filipino Child a Reader”**  
by **Mrs. Flor Marie (Neni) Sta. Romana Cruz**,  
Philippine Board on Books for Young People,  
Sa Aklat Sisikat (“Books Make you Cool”) Foundation ,  
Philippines
- 2:30-3:45 pm Discussion: **“Bangkok World Book Capital 2013 and the next step of the alliance to promote reading”**  
by **M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra**, Governor of Bangkok, and  
**Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa**, Programme Specialist in Literacy and  
Lifelong Learning, UNESCO
- 3:45-4:00 pm Coffee/Tea Break
- 4:00-5:00 pm Special Lecture **“Join in building the base for reading, thinking, learning and preparing people to become ASEAN citizens”** by **Mrs. Suwanee Khamman**, Deputy Secretary General,  
Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board
- 5:00-5:15 pm Closing Ceremony

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# **The Myth of non-literate Culture: The Case of Indonesian Children**

**Setiono Sugiharto**

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A national media in Indonesia once reported that Indonesia was among the nine nations with the highest illiteracy rates. The media further said that between 1995 and 2005 adult illiteracy rates in Indonesia hit over 90 percent. Similarly, implied in the latest report from a non-governmental organization, which offers free education for children in slum areas in Indonesia, the number of illiteracy rates among children increases every year (Sugiharto, 2010 b). Also, it has been reported that Indonesian children are not keen on making reading as their habit.

Historically, the Indonesian government has taken various ways to eliminate illiteracy (see Sugiharto, 2008 a). Under the era of Soeharto, Indonesia's second president, illiteracy elimination programs were conducted both in informal and formal education sectors. In informal education, the program was locally known as a kejar (the abbreviation of kelompok belajar) or group learning. This program was proven to be successful in reducing the illiteracy rates in the country. In formal education, Soeharto, who was known for his equity in national education philosophy, built thousand of state elementary schools in remote areas in the provinces in Indonesia. In the period of 1982-1983, for example, Soeharto's government constructed 22, 600 schools and 150,00 more were built in 1993-1994.

In the post-Soeharto governments, illiteracy has become no less important issue in the national agenda. Under president Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, for example, the Indonesian Ministry of Education has vowed to reduce illiteracy rates from 10.12 per cent in 2003 to 5.0 percent in 2009 (Sugiharto, 2008 a). To help combat illiteracy (especially children illiteracy) in the country, the present government has promoted and continues to promote the national reading campaign and the establishment of community libraries and mobile libraries known locally as *taman bacaan masyarakat* and *perpustakaan keliling*, respectively. The inclusion of the national curriculum in English teaching which emphasized the importance of reading in a foreign language can partly be attributed to the governments' efforts in promoting literacy campaign nation-wide. All of these attempts are included in the Ministry of Education's four-pronged policy, viz. preventing illiteracy among the youths, providing equal access to elementary education for adults, widening access to and improving the quality of functional literacy education, and maintaining literacy competence.

However, despite these laudable efforts, it remains controversial as to whether illiteracy rates in Indonesia have plummeted. The government's claim that the number of illiterate people (adults and children) decreases is often at odd with that of the non-governmental organizations monitoring educational activities. In fact, these organizations never acknowledge the government's claim.

I argue here that the lingering illiteracy problem (which causes people especially children to be unable to read and write) as well as problems related to children's literacy development in general has nothing to do with a cultural aspect . I argue instead that these problems are due to severely limited access to books. In many regions in the country's provinces, many children live under poverty, and thus have little opportunities of attending schools and enjoying access to reading. Furthermore, educational programs are not supportive in enhancing children's literacy development. I therefore propose that providing more access to libraries is the first necessary step to combat illiteracy, and that children's literacy development can be best facilitated

not only by giving them access to books, but also by continuously encouraging them to do self-sponsored recreational reading or what Krashen (2004) calls “free-voluntary reading”. I conclude by discussing the relationship between illiteracy and access to libraries.

### **The Myth of non-Literate Culture**

It is true that many children especially those living in remote areas are illiterate (unable to read and write), and that many children are not accustomed to reading activities, the reason for which will be discussed in the next section. It is also true that many children coming from middle and high income families are loath reading books . But, all this shouldn't be hastily inferred that they belong to a non-literate culture, or that they lack a reading habit.

Sugiharto (2010 a) presents the evidence buttressing the idea that Indonesian children and teenagers are indeed voracious readers, suggesting that they don't lack a reading habit. They regularly visit book-stores at weekend, enthusiastically selecting and picking up books they wish to read from the stores' book-shelves. The books they read come from a variety of genres such as fairy tales, comics, teenage novels, and a series of popular science. Furthermore, children and youngsters often flock to mobile libraries and community reading playgrounds to borrow and read books. They passionately come to these libraries because they enjoy reading in groups with their peers and sharing what they read to each other. It is also interesting to observe that

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<sup>1</sup> It is generally acknowledged that Indonesian culture belongs to an oral culture rather than a literate culture.

<sup>2</sup> Rosita's (2007) survey on Indonesian students' habit of reading revealed that most students responded negatively when asked about their interest in reading in both Indonesian and English.

while most students are not really eager in doing school reading assignments, they love killing their time during the break by doing pleasure reading (reading comics, teenage novels and magazines). University students also love reading what children normally read. When asked what they read, they are never ashamed of admitting they consume light reading instead of academic literature.

Other compelling evidence comes from individual testimonies. One of Sugiharto's (2010 c) students ascribed her English vocabulary improvement and her enthusiasm in reading more English books to her habit of reading comics like *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventure of Moby Dick*, and *Travelers on Gulliver's Island*. Her habit of reading, the student said, developed due to reading these comics.

Stoltz (2006), a student from one of junior high schools in Indonesia, provides an interesting testimony to the "power" of reading. Dubbing herself 'Potteraholic' and identifying herself as an avid reader of fanfiction, this student credited her improvement in writing in English and her success in having it published (for the first time) in a prestigious English newspaper in Indonesia to her habit in reading fictions. She wrote, "I also learned to love writing through fanfiction, and because of fanfiction, I look forward to writing school essays and reports, whereas previously I loathed them" (Stoltz, 2006). Finally, once a non-native English speaking student with limited English proficiency, I must confess that my literacy improvement in both Indonesian and English is due to my obsession with 'light' reading likes folk tales, comics, simplified stories (horror and romance), and teen magazines.

Indonesian folk-tales written in English and graded from Beginner, Intermediate to the Advanced level were especially of high interest to me, and almost every day I would devour them as part of my out-class activities. So interesting, comprehensible and compelling were the stories depicted in these readings that when I read I found myself "lost in the book" and barely aware that I was reading in another language.

My passion in light reading still lingered when I studied at the university. Now having sufficient proficiency in English, I still remain a voracious reader. However, I don't remain on the same diet – reading simplified children literature. Instead, I have moved beyond it. I read more demanding literature, more serious and heavier reading (Sugiharto, 2010 c, p. 422).

All this evidence suggests that everyone (children, youngsters, and adults) are basically avid readers, and that the prevailing perception that Indonesian children in particular and Indonesian people in general lack reading habit is just a sheer myth.

However, it is common to hear that young children don't like reading, often ignoring reading materials exhorted by their teachers and parents. That is, they tend to ignore books that adults and teachers think are 'quality' literature (Krashen and Ujjié, 2005). This, unfortunately, is often interpreted and even generalized that students lack a reading habit. The problem here, however, is not that they lack a reading habit, but they just don't like what is offered to them.

Sugiharto (2010a) and Rosita (2011) have argued that pedagogical and literacy practices in the Indonesian context fail to play a facilitative role in assisting children to nurture their potential as readers. They fail to recognize that every child is in fact a reader. Also, schools create the false impression that reading a 'serious' academic genre and other demanding literature from the early years of learning offer cognitive advantages. Teachers feel obliged to compel students to finish reading textbooks as prescribed in the curriculum. In addition, parents are always apprehensive when they see their children reading books which have no direct relevance to school curriculum. The fear is that children will not receive good grades, make no school progress, and even fail in the exams if they rarely read school textbooks.

Such an apprehension is understandable because light reading such as comics, teen romances, and novels do not directly contribute to students' academic achievements. Light reading activities, it is believed, offer no academic

values and contribute little to intellectual growth. Light reading has also been accused of inhibiting students' path to heavier reading. In short, it can disrupt children's passion in reading academic literature.

Evidence from research on literacy however has debunked this widely-held assumption, demonstrating that light reading has a pedagogical value and determines academic success (see for example, Cho, 2005; Lee, 2005; Mason, 2006). Examining various studies on the effects of light reading on literacy development, Krashen and Ujiié (2005) have come the following conclusion: (1) light reading promotes literacy in general, and (2) light reading leads to heavier reading (i.e. it serves as a conduit for heavier reading).

Responding to the common perception that light reading is of little value for literacy development and academic achievements, Krashen (2004) presents innumerable reassuring evidence bearing testimony to its pedagogical benefit. Comic books, a specific instance of light reading, has been found to be linguistically appropriate, with the illustration in them making the text comprehensible; it has no negative effect on language development and school achievement; it serves as a conduit to heavier reading. Moreover, other examples of light reading such as teen romances and magazines have been shown to offer valuable input and motivation for doing more reading. Krashen, however, does not imply that light reading alone is adequate to attain advanced levels of development. It is however the "mediating variable" that can accelerate literacy development.

None the less, given the valuable insights generated from second language acquisition research confirming its efficacy and the insights that it "provides both the motivation for more reading and the linguistic competence that makes harder reading possible" (Krashen, 2004, p. 116), it thus seems judicious to consider it as one plausible alternative in creating children's reading culture.

## Considering Free Voluntary Reading as the First Step to Creating Kids' Reading Culture

If we are to assist our children in accelerating their literacy skill, it is important that we lower our expectations of them. As has been alluded to previously, it is well established that schools are ambitious in their efforts to equip students with literacy competence, causing students to bear an overwhelming cognitive demands. Not only does this ambition create a high-anxiety learning environment, but it is also counterproductive because it hinders children's efforts to become autonomous language acquirers –the eventual goal of language acquisition.

Furthermore, parents, fearing that their children will fail school exams or get poor grades, exhort their children to read school textbooks (often demanding ones) In many cases, to realize their ambition parents cajole children to read and focus more on school textbooks by offering rewards. There seems to be nothing wrong with this direct exhortation, provided that children like reading textbooks. Krashen (2004, 2007), however, cautions that direct encouragement can backfire unless the reading material is not interesting and meaningful to children. Rewards also can have long-term damaging and harmful effects. That is, by 'bribing' children with extrinsic rewards we divert children's attention from the fact that reading is by itself an intrinsically pleasant activity.

The idea that reading is pleasant is no exaggeration, however. In fact, reading is an activity that children and adult resort to in order to escape the mundane daily routines. To give the evidence of the pleasure of reading, Nell (1988) provides the following testimony, which he quoted from W. Somerset Maugham:

Conversation after a time bores me, games tire me, and my own thoughts, which we are told are the unfailing resource of a sensible man, have a tendency to run dry. Then I fly to my books as the opium-smoker to his pipe...(p. 232).

Thus, if we are eager to create kid's reading culture, the first plausible step to take, in view, is to discover what books children love most and then to provide them with books that suit to their interests and needs. If necessary, we need to set an example by reading in our spare time. This can create the impression that reading is indeed a pleasant activity.

The long-term value of doing this light reading activity is encouraging, as shown by the following quote:

When children read for pleasure, they develop the competence to move from the beginning "ordinary conversational" level to a level where they can use the second language for more demanding purposes, such as the study of literature and business, and so on (Krashen, 2004, 146-147).

The above step is necessary because by providing children with books they love reading – books that are compelling and interesting to them – we provide them with comprehensible and meaningful input. Research has confirmed that if input is comprehensible, meaningful, and has communicative value, language acquisition is likely to take place .

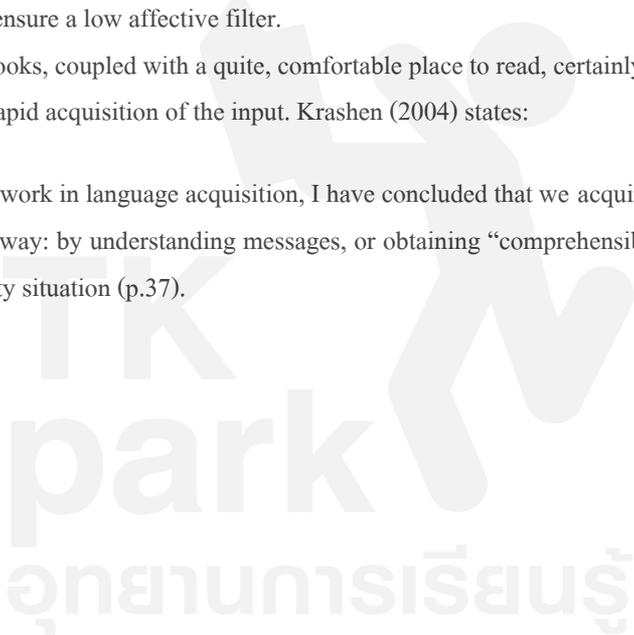
Wang and Lee (2007) points out that easy access to interesting reading materials is one of the most obvious conditions to be met if children are to develop reading habit. Other conditions include developing enthusiasm for reading and developing enough competence to start reading.

When access to interesting and comprehensible books is made possible, children are beginning to develop a feeling of familiarity with and enthusiasm for books; they will get hooked on books, become savvy in choosing what to read, and will eventually become 'a good story teller'. Research finds that children who do extensive free reading eventually choose what experts have decided are "good books", and that they gradually expand their reading interests as they read more. Children also select their own reading which is often harder than adults assume (see Krashen, 2004).

Even without parents' exhortation, kids are keen on picking up books and on discovering their own reading strategies. It is at this point that parents need to give them freedom to decide any books on various genres, and more importantly to encourage them to be the authority in choosing the books. The more freedom the students are given to choose light reading materials, the greater the chance they will have to improve their literacy competence (Rosita, 2011). Another point worth remembering is that apart from easy access to books reading environments needs to be pleasant to ensure a low affective filter.

Access to books, coupled with a quite, comfortable place to read, certainly can help ensure the rapid acquisition of the input. Krashen (2004) states:

In my work in language acquisition, I have concluded that we acquire language in only one way: by understanding messages, or obtaining "comprehensible input" in a low-anxiety situation (p.37).



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<sup>3</sup>

See Krashen 2003, 2004 for a comprehensive review of this research

These entire arguments echo Krashen's (2003, 2004) core premise undergirding his literacy theory –free voluntary reading (FVR). FVR is done voluntarily with the students' initiatives. No books report or obligations to finish reading materials are required. Neither are students hard-pressed to fully understand the book contents so as to answer questions in the test. In essence, FVR is done for one's pleasure, for one's recreational purposes, and for one's own purposes. As Rosita (2011) has argued that doing light reading arouses a child's interest that will sustain them until they are linguistically mature enough to read more challenging or demanding academic texts. She goes on to argue that once reading habit in the first language develops, students will become avid readers. The ability in reading in the first language will facilitate the understanding of reading in the second language.

We can therefore summarize the importance of FVR for literacy pedagogy in a single sentence. Doing light reading may be insufficient for causing further literacy growth, but the habit of reading per se lingers until the reader is linguistically and cognitively mature enough to consume heavy reading materials. Light reading therefore paves the way to heavy reading. An overwhelming number of studies conducted in different contexts with different subjects and methods exist espousing the robustness of FVR, and these studies show considerably consistent results in that FVR is a powerfully effective aid of success in making learners to be autonomous language acquirers.

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<sup>4</sup>

Again see Krashen (2003) and (2004) for a comprehensive review

## **Illiteracy and Access to Libraries**

Ceteris paribus, children who can easily get access to books are highly likely to develop literacy competence faster than those who can't. Implied in the above discussion, a rich-print environment is the first absolute condition to the creation of reading culture. Research confirms this assumption. Better access to books at home and at schools results in more reading (Krashen, 2004), and the more one reads, the better one's literacy development. Also easy access to public libraries not only increases enthusiasm for reading, but also affects how much children read.

Not all children however are lucky enough to enjoy access to books. In big cities in Indonesia where access to books (book stores, public libraries) are easy to find, the number of illiterate children tends to be lower in rates than those coming from poor regions. Similarly, children born and raised by high-income families have been flooded by books at home at early ages of learning, making them acquire their first language faster. Moreover, only children from the opulent can afford to go to and buy books from books-stores, making them read more and more. Also only these children have the privileged to attend good-quality schools which are well-equipped with classroom and school libraries. With such a privilege, children from these high-income families develop their literacy skills much earlier and faster than those coming from low-income families.

Apart from the easy access, big cities in Indonesia usually get prioritized in enjoying access to educational budgets from the central governments. For instance, the establishment of community libraries and mobile libraries –as part of government's program to promote a reading campaign – still takes place in big cities, and has yet to reach underprivileged regions in the country. As I have argued elsewhere (Sugiharto, 2008 b), the most pressing need the government should take to prevent children and youth illiteracy is to build more community libraries in remote regions with high illiteracy rates.

While the government-sponsored program of exhorting children to read should be lauded, it has not yet been enjoyed by children living poor regions. The latest data from the Indonesian Ministry of Education Report for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006, Literacy for Life showed that only 5 percent of some 70,000 villages in Indonesia have community libraries with no available reports on the number of books available.

As the data was taken from 2006, it seems unfair to make a sweeping generalization that the figure remains valid today. There may be an increase in the number of libraries built in the remote regions. Yet, because there are still differing opinions (between government and non-governmental organization monitoring national education) as to whether illiteracy rates have been plummeted, it is safe to argue that the number might increase, but probably not significant.

In my view, the most realistic and viable strategic plan the Indonesian government should make to fight illiteracy is to enrich the print environment. That is, to provide access to community libraries equipped with compelling reading materials and with trained librarians. With the Indonesian government commitment to improving the quality of national education, such a plan is certainly feasible.

As has been mentioned above, while more public libraries have been built, they have not yet reached the underprivileged provinces, which means that many children of poverty are denied opportunities to get access to books. The inequity of the provision of the access to books unfortunately widens the gap between literate and illiterate children in Indonesia. Those who enjoy access to books both at home and school tend to read more and develop literacy competence faster, while those who don't will remain illiterate.

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The Indonesian government allocated 20 percent of its state budget for boosting the quality of education in Indonesia.

In his review of studies on the importance of access to libraries, Krashen (2004) emphasizes the following important points:

- . When the print environment is enriched, more reading is done. The more books children have at home, the more they read.
  
- . Schools and classroom equipped with better libraries encourage more reading and create children's reading culture.
  
- . Access to public libraries not only results in more reading, but also greatly increases enthusiasm for reading.
  
- . Finally, the richer the print environment, the better the literacy development.

With these insights, it becomes clear that continuous efforts to fight illiteracy and to promote reading campaigns (i.e. to create children's reading culture) will come to no avail unless children are supplied with a rich-print environment at homes, at schools and in the societies in general. Through this means, it seems enough to guarantee the establishment of children's reading culture.

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## **Reading Promotion and Library in Lao PDR**

### **Supporting by Room to Read Laos**

**Ms Somphet Phongphachanh**

#### **Country Profile:**

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a small country with a land area of 236,000 square kilometers, stretching more than 1700 kms from north to south and between 100 to 400 kilometers from east to west. It is a landlocked country bordering China to the north, Vietnam to the east, Cambodia in the south, and Myanmar and Thailand in the West. The Western border follows mainly the north-south course of the Mekong River. Some 80% of the country is mountainous and almost half of it is covered with forest (47%). The mountains pose difficulties for transportation and communication. Together with abundance of rivers, however, the mountains produce vast potential for the development of hydroelectric power. Forest consists of wide varieties of species, including hardwoods. Sizable deposits of minerals such as iron ore and coal are scattered across the mountainous area.

Laos is the least densely populated country in Southeast Asia with 24 persons per square kilometer. In the 2005 census, the population was 5,621,982 inhabitants and the growth was estimated to be 2.1%. In 2009, it is estimated to be 6,100,000 inhabitants. Most of the population lives in rural areas (80%) in or near small villages. The physical characteristics and lacks of development have led to wide disparities in economic conditions, health, education, and other aspect of life, particularly in the rural and remote areas. The country is divided into 16 provinces and a Capital City. Each province is divided into Districts and Villages. There are in total 142 districts with 47

of them considered as poorest and where priorities program of the government should go there, and 10,500 villages throughout the county.

Lao PDR is an agricultural country, (livestock, fisheries, and forestry) which employees 85% of the labor force, mostly within the subsistence economy. Women makes up of 45 percent of the labor force. The industrial and service sectors of the economy account for about 40 percent of GDP. The annual per capita income is 500 US\$ in 2005 and 800-900 US\$ in 2009 (estimation). Under the incentives of the New Economic Mechanism, adopted in 1986, the industrial, manufacturing, and the wholesale and retail trade in the services sectors have steadily grown.

### **The Education Information:**

The Lao education system was reconstructed in 1975. It now consists of five year of primary, three years of lower-secondary and three years of upper-secondary schooling (5+3+3). As the general educational sub-sector reform initiated during the national conference in 2006, this structure will be changed to 5+4+3, beginning the school year 2009-10. Currently there are 8,871 Primary schools ( 51,9% is completion primary schools ), 1,125 Secondary Schools.

Literacy is defined as ability to reading, writing, and numeracy. Non formal education as well as primary school enrollments, varies from province to province. Adult literacy rates ranges from 43.1 to 91.7 percent. The national average of Literacy rate for 15-40 age group is 85%, for adults over 15+ is 77%, and net enrolment ratios from 73.6 percent in Luangnamtha to 94.2 percent in the Vientiane Capital. Literacy rates both for youth and adult were low in percentage and poor in quality in remote mountainous and ethnic groups' areas, because of the quality of teachers. Literacy classes normally are organized after primary school hours, and taught by primary class-room teachers.

In most of the case these teachers are themselves untrained (15-18%) of the total number of primary schools teachers in the whole country, and are mostly in these regions.

The adults and youth literacy rates in the country in the Lao Literacy Survey 2001 were for each group ages as follow: Population aged 15+ :Total :68.7 % , :Female: 60.9% and Male 77.0% . Adults: Aged 15-39, Total: 75.4%, Female:71.1% and Male 80.2%. Adults Aged 15-59, Total: 72.3%, Female: 65.5% and Male 79.5%. Among the provinces , Vientiane Capital registered the highest adult (aged 15+ literacy rates with 93.8% for males and 86.7% for females. Champasack Province stood second in term of adult literacy with 83% for both gender, Vientiane Province, second in term of socio-economic standing, were mediocre in term of adult literacy: only 81.4% for males and 67.8% for females. Females literacy rates were very low (lower than 50%) in Saravan, Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Oudomxay, Huaphanh, Luangprabang and Bokeo. For Room to Read provinces the figure were as follow:

**Reported literacy rates (in Lao Language) in Provinces where is RtR Laos implementation.**

Province	Population Aged 15+		Adults :Aged 15-39			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Lao PDR	77.0%	60.9%	68.7%	80.2%	71.1%	75.4%
Vientiane Capital	93.8%	86.7%	90.2%	94.6%	94.5%	94.5%
Phongsaly	56.2%	37.2%	46.5%	60.1%	48.0%	53.8%
Oudomxay	69.1%	41.8%	55.3%	73.3%	49.9%	61.2%
Bokeo	72.1%	48.6%	59.6%	77.3%	63.3%	69.7%
Xayabouly	78.9%	69.8%	74.3%	82.9%	81.3%	82.0%
Vientiane Province	81.4%	67.8%	74.5%	85.9%	79.3%	82.4%
Bolikhamxay	83.7%	69.2%	76.3%	87.1%	79.1%	82.8%
Savannakhet	72.2%	56.8%	64.1%	76.7%	70.4%	73.4%
Salavane	57.9%	36.8%	47.1%	57.4%	41.9%	49.5%

The data collected by the Department of Non Formal Education for the School Year 2008-2009, from the Reports of the Provinces, although not completed, data collected from only 8,925 villages out of 10,500 villages for the whole Country, have given us general view on the Literacy Rates of the Country. The Report gave the numbers of illiterate peoples. The Rates in the table below were calculation by the Consultant.

#### illiteracy rates in some and Room to Read supported Province

Province	6-14 years illiteracy Rates		15-24 years illiteracy Rates		25-40 years illiteracy Rates		40+ years illiteracy Rates	
	Male	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
Lao PDR	5.01%	5.45%	4.52%	5.76%	5.81%	7.26%	18.34%	20.49%
Vientiane Cap.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.34%	3.14%
Phongsaly	28.0%	30.3%	28.0%	46.0%	29.76%	33.64%	60.79%	73.79%
Oudomxay	1.98%	2.54%	3.08%	3.78%	5.56%	6.69%	29.53%	34.64%
Bokeo	8.99%	11.30%	12.1%	13.76%	17.17%	22.11%	25.52%	28.47%
Xayabouly	0.38%	0.39%	0.97%	1.3%	1.60%	1.82%	2.50%	3.26%
Vientiane Prov.	0.8%	0.8%	1.60%	1.82%	2.50%	3.26%	11.87%	12.17%
Bolikhamxay	1.88%	2.27%	2.96%	4.28%	5.80%	8.14%	15.76%	19.62%
Savannakhet	8.99%	10.16%	6.41%	8.19%	7.54%	8.83%	20.07%	24.34%
Salavane	15%	15%	6.98%	8.39%	7.40%	8.19%	22.86%	23.12%
Champasak	0.41%	0.41%	0.18%	0.21%	0.33%	0.37%	4.19%	5.16%

Source: Department of Non Formal Education 2008-2009

#### Reading Promotion in Laos:

The survey of reading practices among primary school children undertaken by the National Library of Laos and the General Education Department of the Ministry of Education from 1975 to 1988, found that children who were studying in the first three grades of school were unable to read (i.e. they could only recite by heart). Even those who completed their school education could not read well. The survey, which was

conducted in every province of Laos, found that children did not enjoy reading because there were no books of a suitable level for them. In fact there were only school textbooks, but no illustrated children's books suitable for their ages. Many people say that Lao people do not like to read books, but in fact they do have a long literary and storytelling tradition, which has been passed down through the ages. From the survey they saw that children love to read, but lacked materials and people who could nurture their interest. As a result, the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Ministry of Education set up the National Reading Promotion Program, which has been running since 1989 until the present day, and which is planned to continue until 2020, to build a reading society.

The activities of the program are the printing of children's books, mobile libraries, portable libraries, reading rooms, school libraries and community libraries. For children who have not been to school, there is a team of storytellers who use puppet shows at the village level and promote understanding about the importance of children's education and reading among parents.

Following rural survey and outreach activities to raise awareness about the importance of literacy and library services, the National Library requests external funding to cover construction costs, and has received support from many countries. However, while they are grateful for this support, like the rain in Laos, it sometimes arrives in large quantities in one place and other places are left dry. Over the past 20 years, the program has only been able to cover about 40 percent of the country, which leaves a huge number of children remaining in need. According to statistics collected by the Ministry of Education, there are approximately 8,400 primary schools in the country, of which our mobile libraries now reach 6,800. Each mobile library has one box containing 250 books. Schools which provide a spare room to us receive a dedicated reading room or if space is more limited, a 'reading corner.' When they have

sufficient funds, they construct separate library buildings, of about 5m by 7m in size, with 1,500 – 3,000 books. They are also constructing public libraries for each province, but have only completed nine out of 17 provinces as of 2010. They emphasize the role of these provincial public libraries as centers to provide services to their satellite libraries.

In summary, external funding has enabled us to provide over 6,000 mobile libraries, almost 1,000 school reading rooms, and 35 joint community and school libraries and learning centers, and nine major provincial libraries. The main sponsors include the Room to Read Laos, Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA), Action for Lao Children (ACL), the American Library Project, Empowerment for All (EFA), Collectif de Bibliothécaires et Intervenants en Action Culturelle (COBIAC), etc. In addition, they have a '10 day' library construction project run by the leader of the Reading Promotion Project and their team. In this project, volunteers from abroad join the National Library team for 10 days, during which they experience a home stay with rural Lao families. This project is greatly enjoyed by all participants and by the local communities and people are astonished that beautiful libraries can be constructed in such a short time, and have labeled the team leader as the 'miracle woman of library construction.'

The Reading Promotion program as we present above has been contributing to the improvement of the quality of education in remote areas and addressing a gap of book access of Laos for over 20 years. Significant progress has been made in reducing the disparity in the quality of education in urban and rural areas, and children in many rural areas now have improved access to educational resources such as library services, and teachers have also improved their pedagogical methods. As we observed the illiteracy rate, the GoL encourage to promote reading habit in Lao PDR by allowing to many INGOs support reading activities in Laos PDR and how to decrease the gap of book access and improving the learning outcomes ( Quality of Education ).

While the government would like education to be available in all parts of the country with quality improvement, in practice there remain significant inequalities in its provision. In particular, literacy levels have been very low in primary schools, both in rural and urban schools. Children from ethnic groups must learn Lao in the first year of primary school before beginning the regular curriculum in the second year. The Lao Government has made significant progress in the construction of rural schools from kindergarten to secondary levels, which are now found throughout the country, with little difference between urban and rural areas. The government has also produced and distributed textbooks to all schools, and teachers receive additional training each year. However, there is still a significant disparity in the quality of education in rural areas and urban areas, where there is greater access to resources such as libraries and book shops, computers, and the Internet. These resources are largely lacking in rural areas, where the majority of Lao children live. In order to lessen this inequality and one important skill to help children to meet with quality of education is “Reading Skill Developing “. Thus the Room to Read Laos has established a program to improve literacy in rural areas, including reading, writing and speaking, through building libraries, publishing many local language books for children and the distribution of books to school where already has a libraries , etc. The overall aim of these programs is to improve the services related to the provision of education and knowledge for children in Laos.

At the start of the program, we faced many challenges. For example, supplementary reading materials to support their education were lacking, and the books that were available were mostly been for adults, which are too difficult for young children to read. Room to Read found that one solution to this situation is to publish more children’s books but were unsatisfactory for both teachers and students due to their different cultural content. At that time, Lao writers were not yet producing books, therefore we organize the writing workshop for youth writers to produce a good and

attractive books for children. From this idea, the Room to Read Laos printed more than 80 titles in last 5 years and we also got award on “ Producing the best books for children “ in 2 years continued by Ministry of Information and Culture.

### **Room to Read Laos from 2005 – 2010:**

Room to Read works in partnership with the Lao government and key NGO’s to help foster reading habits among primary school children in Laos. In keeping with the Room to Read conviction that local teams are best for local work, the Room to Read Laos has a dedicated team of staff who apart from speaking the language is familiar with the customs and laws, and more importantly, understand the issues related to program implementation.

Room to Read flagged off three programs in Laos with the support of the Ministry of Education and the Department of General Education. These include the School Room, Reading Room, and Local Language Publishing Programs. Later, the Girls’ Education Program was added to the list.

Five years ago, Room to Read Laos the “Enhancing Education for Lao Children” project as “We believe that World Change Starts with Educated Children”. Our thrust areas include establishing Reading Rooms, constructing School Rooms, publishing Local language books, and providing scholarship to girls.

This report captures a summary of our work. Our figures are a testimony of our dedication and commitment to fulfill our goals and to accomplish our mission.

We work hard to include new schools to our present list we are also committed to focus on the quality and content of each of our programs especially the

quality book access in our libraries, this is ensured by a very exacting monitoring and evaluation system apart from the unstinting support of our community, school principals, and teachers who work hard to ensure these programs are implemented without compromising on quality. We also respect the decision of the community and encourage them to be co-owners of the program right from the inception of the program. We also receive good cooperation from the Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Service and District Education Bureau. As true partners, they inspire, encourage and help us at every stage. Of special value to us is their support to monitor and train our teams in addition to taking over the reins of the program at the end of our three-year support phase. The support from the government guarantees long term sustainability to our work.

### **Reading Room program:**

The Reading Room program was initiated to promote a reading culture among children so that they could benefit from the habit of reading. Room to Read Laos partners with the Government through the Department of Education, as well as the school and the local community to set up libraries in schools-which in our parlance are referred to as Reading Room (RR)

We have two different models for Reading Room in Laos - A separate room (SR) or a library filled with books and reading materials; as well a second model which is class room library (CR) which is in effect cupboards and book shelves kept in the corner of the class for easy access and Construction Reading Room ( CRR ) to schools where has many children.

Each library is supported for three years, with reading materials as well as training for the library teachers/facilitators. The trainings are focused on library

management and to promote reading activities and how children can access the books as equally in school and community level.

Our endeavor is to instill confidence and skills in the community and the school to help them to take ownership of the project by the end of three years.

During this report period, we have conducted several activities across all the six provinces we work (18 districts and 424 libraries) to encourage children to read. All these activities were well attended and infused the children with a curiosity to hear or read more stories. In all 8229 students, 589 teachers, and 2055 people from community attended these activities.

#### **Achievements:**

Following is the year wise break-up of the number of Reading Rooms we have established

2005: 50 RR

2006: 102 RR

2007: 210 RR

2008: 170 RR

2009: 160 RR

2010: 160 RR

Total: 852 Reading Rooms

#### **Local Language Publishing Program:**

Laos is lacking of attractive and creative books for children and local authors and illustrators are also less of experiences on children book producing. According to this information RTR Laos is not only focusing on Reading Room establishing we

also focus on producing attractive and creative books for children through cooperation with local authors, illustrators and Publishing Department in Laos for publishing more books for children.

Room to Read started publishing books for children in their native language to address a need-based gap in this area. We realized from our experience of working in the field that in order to excite children and get them interested in reading, the child needs to understand the language and the context well. Most books available in English were in effect actually distancing the child from reading as they were not familiar with some of words and sometimes did not even understand the context as they were not tailored to suit the local culture.

Since the establishment of the first Reading Room in the year 2005, our libraries have grown to include a variety of child friendly and age appropriate reading materials. Our activity-focused programs have encouraged students to read as well as to do better in their academic work. We have also noted that our programs have fostered confidence in the children and they are now more articulate and sociable in school.

The Local Language Publishing program (LLP) in Laos scouts for local talented writers and illustrators and then trains them to write for our school children; so that children in rural schools have access to grade and age appropriate books which are culturally and locally relevant.

Apart from publishing our own books, our team cooperates with many local authors and illustrators to publish books. These reading materials are distributed to our Reading Rooms in the Provinces in addition to supplying books to other organizations which request us for materials for their community and distribution

these books to other poor provinces and other libraries for decreasing the gap of book access in Laos.

In addition to our regular work, our Local Language Publishing Program and Reading Room Program, organize Book events with teachers and children in neglected provinces (for example in Mekong province which is not Room to Read’s target area.) At these events we share books, exchanges ideas about how to foster a reading habit among children who do not have opportunities to access books.

### **Achievements:**

Printed 561,000 copies and Published 98 new titles of books, posters and picture story cards.

### **Awards**

We are proud to share that our publications are very popular and have won several awards

2008: The Best Book of the Year Award - Title “Candle Light”

2009: The Best Book of the Year Award for 2 books -

Title “Nang Oy’s Dream” and “Many Bags”

Room to Read’s Local Language Publications won two of the four 2009 Laos Book Excellence Awards giving annually by the Ministry of Information and Culture.

## Good story:

### Children in Laos Need Books

In February 2009 Room to Read staff along with friends from Warehouse Associates visited Xekong Province, in the south of Laos to distribute books to schools in these remote provinces. We were warmly welcomed by the Provincial Education Service staff. All of them were delighted to hear that Room to Read Laos had come with books to their province even though this province is not in the work ambit of Room to Read Laos.

At the Xekong Complete Secondary School a large gathering of teachers were waiting for the books. They were excited to see the many books and some of the teachers started to read these books almost immediately. Many of them were interested in Room to Read publications in particular.

Mr. Lisaka Priayen, the Director of Thonglay Primary School, Lamam District, Xekong Province said “I came here today because I heard that Room To Read would be distributing their books free of cost and I hoped to receive some books for my students who are waiting for me at my school. I am happy to see these story books both English and Lao. We are particularly thankful for this privilege as my school was in need of good story books for our students.

I would like to thank Room to Read for reaching out to our province which is one of the poorest areas in Laos with books. I would also like to invite Room to Read Laos to expand its’ programs to Xekong and publish more books especially on Lao literature, local poems, Lao folktales for our children.”

**School Room Program:**

Room to Read's School Room Program was born out a need to ensure schools had a place to accommodate a Reading Room and this is a one factor to address the gap of book access because schools needs space for conducting reading promotion activities and also that it was a child friendly structure. Since we work with disadvantaged groups in rural settings, we found there were many schools that were dilapidated and not the best environment for a child to look forward to coming to school. We have since then taken forward the challenge of supporting schools with better infrastructure with the support of the local community to ensure ownership and sustainability.

Our Challenge Grant provides meaningful opportunities for communities to contribute to the project, both financially and through decision-making. The School Room Challenge Grant ensures robust community participation; community contribution and post construction maintenance

**Key objectives of the Challenge Grant**

- To encourage active participation by the community in the construction process
- To develop a sense of ownership among community towards school
- To promote project sustainability by taking responsibility of the maintenance of assets and continuation of good practices demonstrated during program implementation.
- To build community capacity in school management
- To strengthen the relationship between School, Room to Read and the community
- To ensure women's participation in community decisions
- To reduce the School Room project cost to Room to Read and our donors

In addition to the Challenge Grant, we ensure community participation in building schools by entrusting the community to take the lead. Village members are elected to form the 'School Construction Committee' (SCC) and this Committee is responsible for executing the program under the supervision of Room to Read's expertise. The team, which has a fair representation of women from the villages; includes school teachers, village authorities, and members of the School Parent Association, members from the local youth and women unions in addition to esteemed village persons. This group takes responsibility of buying materials, supervising the construction, and controlling the expenditure in addition to ensuring that a member is appointed to update the village on a routine basis about the project.

In areas where village committees are active the committee is given the responsibility to monitor the School Room projects. However, if committees are not active or unable to take up this responsibility, the SCC is the body that is responsible to ensuring that School Room project is in accordance to what was planned.

### **Roles and responsibility of SCC**

- The SCC is the body that signs the MoU with Room to Read.
- The SCC is responsible to mobilize the village. SCC involves them and keeps them informed the construction work. The SCC ensures co-operation and support for the program from the entire village.
- The Committee participates in all the Room to Read's community-based construction activities
- They are also responsible for forming sub-committees for separate activities such as material purchasing committee, book keeping committee and allocate these responsibilities

- The team procures material in required quantities as per specifications and procedures
- They engage & monitor the skilled and unskilled labor for the project
- Last but not the least, they collect “challenge grant” from community/government and other parties

### **Achievements**

2005: 8 School Rooms

2006: 16 School Rooms

2007: 48 School Rooms

2008: 38 School Rooms

2009: 32 School Rooms

2010: 30 School Rooms

**Total: 172 School Rooms**

### **Girl’s Education program**

Room to Read’s Girls Education program is an important constituent of our work as it helps young disadvantaged girls to study. Our team identifies young girls from marginalized and economically weak communities and provides them with scholarship till they finish their schooling in addition to giving them books, uniforms, additional tuitions, life skill trainings and even bicycles where needed so that girls can complete their education.

We pay special emphasis to include girls in secondary school because we found, that is where the biggest gaps in gender equality in education exist.

In Laos, our scholars are selected starting from Grade 3 to be scholars in Grade 4 and again from Grade 5 to be scholars in Grade 6 as secondary level. Room to Read together with Provincial Education Service ( PES ) and District Education Bureau ( DEB ) set up girl selection committee which include the master of the village, members from the student's women union, the village economist, teachers and parents from each school in the area to help select the girls.

We have also decided to entrust the Community by using Group Base Approach to guide us about selection the girls. As a result, we have focused on areas where there is evidence of discrimination between girls and boys and have enrolled girls from minority groups who are not supported by the Government. In 2008, we enrolled 52 girls from a minority group and placed them in a boarding school as these girls could not be accommodated on the government quota at other schools.

The Girls Education Program provides financial support to our scholars to cover their tuition fees, provides educational materials such as text books, note books, stationery, school uniforms, shoes, bags and a bicycle for children who live more than 2.5 km away from school.

In addition, the program provides tutoring - called need-based tutoring - for the main subjects for the entire academic year. Intensive tutoring is also given to some students for a month before the examinations. This program further provides "life skill" training so that the girls learn to be confident, have increased self esteem, hone their decision making skills so that they can negotiate and decide for themselves.

Apart from ensuring the girls' academic progress, the program ensures that the scholars keep good health and facilitates for periodic health checkups.

Our staff spends time with the parents of our scholars to sensitize them and to encourage their daughters to study instead of sending them to work in Thailand.

### **Achievements**

2007: 200 girls

2008: 325 girls

2009: 300 girls

2010: 250 girls

**Total: 1075 Scholars**

### **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

Room to Read takes pride in being a responsible and transparent organization. Our Monitoring and Evaluation team is vigilant and is constantly finding ways to encourage all the teams to raise the bar. This in turn, ensures that all programs operate as planned and achieve expected objectives and goals apart from helping our donors and stake holders to have confidence in our working methodology.

This exercise also alerts staff to take corrective measures in time thereby ensuring sustainability of our programs; all of which translates as benefits for our Lao children as they receive a better educational opportunities.

Our M & E teams pay great attention to check how many books students borrow to take home each day, how many students visit the library, which are the most preferred books by children in addition to monitoring reading room activities and the content of the bi-monthly meetings to engage students to visit libraries. The exercise also includes vetting reading scores of students in Grade 1 – 3 and periodic evaluations give us a fairly accurate picture of how these students are performing as these exercises are conducted every six months.

Room to Read Laos with support from staff from Regional and Global Offices have made great efforts in designing M&E systems/mechanism. We have in place a Global Solutions Database (GSD) which is accessible to all staff across the world. This is an important tool for field data collection and at the click of a button we have access to a wide field of accurate data which could include anything from the no of new schools built in the last year or the number of libraries that will be phased out in the present year the number of students in each program.

In the last five years Room to Read's four major programs have supported education in Laos by providing Reading Rooms, School Rooms, scholarships to girls and books in the local language. These programs have provided opportunities to hundreds of children especially those who stay in rural areas and disadvantaged settings to access schools with books as well.

### **Strategic Planning of Room to Read Laos: (2011 – 2016)**

#### **Vision Statement**

Room to Read believes that world change starts with educated children. We envision a world in which all children can pursue a quality education that enables them to reach their full potential and contribute to their community and the world.

#### **Mission Statement**

Room to Read seeks to transform the lives of millions of children in developing countries by focusing on literacy and gender equality in education. Working in collaboration with local communities, partner organizations and governments, we develop literacy skills and a habit of reading among primary school children, and support girls to complete secondary school with the relevant life skills to succeed in school and beyond.

As we get ready to mark our ten-years of hard work across the globe, Room to Read is ready to shift gears to move to the next level. We have identified Literacy and Girls Education Program to be our two important core areas as we move forward. This shift would now require us to change from ‘creating a reading habit’ to ensuring children become ‘independent readers’ and also change our target groups from pre-school and secondary students to primary school students where the focus will be on Grade 1 and 2 students. As a result, all of our programs will eventually cease to be stand-alone programs and will instead become collaborative components of the Literacy and Girl’s Education Programs.

The following are our plans for our different programs:

### **Reading Room Program**

1. Ensuring more opportunities for children to access reading material that is culturally relevant, age- appropriate, and reflecting gender equality
2. Building capacity for teachers and librarians to promote literacy and to develop a reading habit among primary school children
3. Improving school environments to make it child friendly
4. Sensitizing parents, peer groups and communities to support and encourage reading
5. Collaborating with the government in order to garner support for implementing policies and strategic plans in primary schools

### **Local Language Publishing Program**

1. Closely cooperate & collaborate with Reading Room & Literacy in producing materials to support reading habit and reading skills. Local Language Publishing will identify reading leveling and produce books to match reading each level.

2. Develop writing and illustrating skills for local writers and illustrators to produce materials to support literacy, particularly early readers like primary grade 2.
3. Support both Reading Room and Literacy programs.

### **School Room Program**

1. Providing access to educational infrastructure that would be child friendly by ensuring clean, bright, well-constructed learning spaces
2. Collect school data in the joint school profile form and identify schools for literacy and/or GEP programs.
3. Begin literacy or GEP program at the school.
4. Analyze infrastructure needs, and prepare school-wise construction budgets.
5. Support schools with additional infrastructure improvements as needed.
6. Provide regular monitoring and technical assistance for ongoing maintenance

### **Girl's Education Program**

1. Enlisting more girls on the scholarship program by using community based approach
2. Identify communities where there is a high proportion of disparity between boys and girls
3. Providing tutoring and mentoring where necessary
4. Providing life skill training for all scholars
5. Innovating our programs to ensure program sustainability

### **Conclusion**

During the past 5 years, significant progress has been made through our efforts to address the gap of book access and reduce the disparity in the quality of education in

urban and rural areas of Laos. Children in many rural areas now have improved access to educational resources such as library services, and teachers have also improved their pedagogical methods. This has been a contribution from the Room to Read's project towards the Lao Governments overall goals for education provision.

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# How Malaysia Reads: Individual, Home, and School Initiative

Ambigapathy Pandian

*“The man who doesn’t read books has no advantage over the man  
who can’t read them.”*

*- Mark Twain*

## Introduction

We are living in a new world that presents us with new astounding experiences and social changes (M. Kalantzis & Ambigapathy Pandian, 2001). From paper and books, we are now confronting a range of inscription forms like spreadsheets, electronically - processed images and pictures, hypertexts, game interfaces, new storage and transmission modes like CDs, thumb drives and worldwide networking. The emergence of a new digital media era highlights the importance of promoting reading habits and behavior in a complex setting as reading helps us to advance human development that includes self-esteem and empowerment, civic participation, economic growth and cultural transformation. (M. Kalantzis & Cope, 2005). Strong reading habits enhance skills required in teaching, learning and work spaces (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a) and (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997b). An increasingly competitive economy demands a high literate workforce that can pursue economic, social and civic activities that can enhance economic progress, community life and civic engagement (Ambigapathy Pandian & Shanthi Balraj, 2005)

In fact, a fresh perspective on reading is encapsulated by the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD, 2003):

*“Reading literacy is defined in PISA as the ability to understand, use and reflect on written texts in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate effectively in society.”*

Viewed from this perspective, reading transcends the traditional notions ascribed to it and assumes a wider role as a potentially powerful tool that is more holistically beneficial to the learner. In other words, readers utilise texts not merely for private consumption and individual benefits but more for public sharing and the common good.

(Ruddell & Unrau, 2004) state that “every reading act is an event, or transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of science, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context” (p.1369). They view the reader and the text as two different aspects of a total dynamic situation. The meaning-making by the reader does not come from the text or the reader. It involves an active mental process during the transition between the text and the reader. The reading structure of what the reader is reading is highly influenced by the reader’s cultural, personal and social history. Apart from that reading is also influenced by the reader’s current interest, motivation and environment (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

### **Reading in Malaysia**

Reading practices in many parts of the world, including Malaysia have been declining in the past few decades, and the steepest decline is among young adults (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997b). Within the Malaysian context, reading is an activity that is fast losing appeal as other forms and types of media gain ascendancy (Ambigapathy Pandian, 2004b). This decline is largely attributable to the advent of the new media with its capacity to provide infotainment and interactivity through a variety of

sophisticated modalities that present the visual, the aural and the sensual in easily accessible packages (Ambigapathy Pandian & Shanthi Balraj, 2010a). These novel modalities have not only displaced traditional modes of reading but have also nurtured a perception that reading is essentially tedious and monotonous activity. The net effect of this trend is the drop of reading amongst Malaysians as attested by several national level reading surveys (Small & Associates, 1997). These surveys noted that, on average, the per capita reading output amongst Malaysians amounted to 7 pages per day with almost 80% reading only 2 books per annum. These findings imply that reading has reached a plateau amongst Malaysian public. The concern here is that many people, irrespective of their age, ethnicity, gender and education do not read and the enabling environment for the development of reading practices is rather weak. Books have been found to be important for passing examinations and once young people finish school, the reading practice dwindles rapidly (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a).

The weak reading culture is also attributed to the fact that students come from a non-reading culture both at home and at school (Ambigapathy Pandian & Shanthi Balraj, 2002b) in elucidating on the reading habits of university and upper secondary students in English observed that a majority of the respondents who read were urbanites from an English speaking background, had more access to a wide variety of reading materials within the home environment, had a supportive school environment and were invariably from a better socio-economic background. (Ismail & Zainab, 2005) in a survey of undergraduates within a local university noted the students read for academic purposes while (Ambikapathi Shanmugam, 1999) reported similar findings amongst trainee teachers. Both these findings concurred with similar research conducted elsewhere. For instance, (Wei Xia, 2003) reported a similar pattern amongst undergraduates in New Zealand. In their study, (McKnight & Dearnley, 2003) and (Guthrie, 2002) also highlighted the trends among

university students to utilise electronic media for essentially the completion of tasks and assignments. These studies reveal that reading-related issues can be common in different cultural contexts.

It is important then to explore the reading practices in different settings to map some of the realities and challenges emerging in the Malaysian learning contexts. The focus on the individual, family and school setting are important aspects in thinking about reading experiences.

### **The individual**

A new problem breeding among Malaysian students is reading reluctancy (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997b). Reluctant readers are able readers who have good grades in the language but choose not to read. There is an abundance of reading materials in the libraries, but most students do not read these materials, either for purposes of information or pleasure (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997b). There are various reasons why students are reluctant to read. There are instances where students refuse to read because they face reading difficulties, however, their reluctance is often rooted in a lack of interest in the given text or the act of reading itself, instead of their reading ability” (Worthy, Patterson, Salas, Prater, & Turner, 2002).

The term reluctant readers refer to people who can read but choose not to (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a) and (Smith, 1994). Reluctance to read among educated Malaysians has been related to poor reading habits and disinterest while in school as the education system in Malaysia places great emphasis on examinations as measures for academic achievement to the exclusion of other measures and values (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a). This unfortunately leads students to cultivate the mentality of reading only for the sake of undertaking examinations, instead of for interest in seeking knowledge and for pleasure.

Also, one of the things that young people often say is that it is difficult to find time to read. Their everyday lives are filled with homework, extracurricular activities, tuition, sporting activities, shopping and social media networking (Ambigapathy Pandian & Shanthi Balraj, 2010b). There are many reasons that are given but essentially it can be seen that they are not motivated towards reading as they may lack interest or do not place a high value on reading. They may also find reading boring and lack motivation. Past reading experiences, negative thoughts and attitudes, difficulty in reading and a lack of confidence may pose challenges to reading practices. The lack of focus, direction and support from immediate friends and family kills the motivation to developing a reading culture. The formation of readers' interests and behavior is determined by a number of factors such as social values of their society, school, family and environment. Each factor has its own function and promotes the development of readers' personalities (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997b).

## **Home**

Learning to read can be likened to mastering one's native language. When children see the family reading the newspaper or curling up with a book, they will want to follow the example. It is of benefit for young people to be immersed in a print-rich environment with suitable books and role models of adults who read both for themselves and to the young people (Woolfolk, 2004). Reading to children should not stop as they grow older. It is important for members at home to enjoy the chance to do something together. Additionally, it is crucial that young people go beyond learning to read, and develop a reading culture for lifelong learning (Ambigapathy Pandian, 2002a).

The frequency of reading events in the home is linked closely to the learner's personal focus and involvement in the literacy events (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a). Parents who create a friendly environment that nurtures reading by providing space, materials, encouragement and example will promote the love for reading (Greaney, 1986). The presence of role models at home is positively linked to two reading behavior variables: variety of materials and time spent on reading. It is likely that parents and siblings who read at home do read a variety of materials; e.g. newspapers and books in English and in Malay, and thus spend more time reading.

A Malaysian student (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a) is more likely to be a habitual reader in English if he or she

- Lives in an urban area rather than a rural area.
- Comes from a family with a higher SES
- Comes from a home where there is a greater variety and amount of materials in English, more home influence and reading models at home.
- Has attended a school with a greater variety and amount of materials in English, with more teachers who encourage students to read and more friends who read English.
- Has more exposure to English.
- Has a more positive attitude towards reading in English.

### **School**

The decline of reading habits among students is not a new problem in Malaysia. In 1926, Lehman commented that the task of teaching reading for pleasure was not properly handled in secondary school (Rankin, 1972). A similar concern was echoed by Hirsch(1987) as cited in (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a) when he said that the

school has the young people for about seven hours of a day and should therefore be able to make a significant impact on the students' literacy. Just and Carpenter (1985) as cited in (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a) quote Purves (1981) as cited in (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a) who had earlier argued that the home background was the determinant for achievement but now agree that the school also has effects on student achievement. Bowers, Howard and Charles (1987) as cited in (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997a) reported findings from a study carried out during the 1986-87 school year in Tennessee country schools where they found that the physical environment of a school significantly affected student achievement either positively or adversely. Other researchers also tend to agree that the school environment has an effect on intrinsic motivation (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). This includes classroom organization as well as instructional and climatic variables like the quality of teacher-student and student-student relationships.

The school environment has an important role to play in fostering positive reading habits and a good library is important to help overcome the problem of catering for children who, although in a single class, have reached different levels of reading ability. Malaysian schools are now better prepared and equipped with a well-stocked library, allowing the teachers to take time with the slow readers while giving a free rein to the good readers (Ambiga pathy Pandian, Shaik Abdul Malik Mohamed Ismail, & Toh Chwee Hiang, 2010). Well-provided libraries with a designated, comfortable reading area certainly should encourage students to read in the library.

The availability of a variety of reading materials and sufficient materials for the students to borrow would encourage the students to read for lifelong learning pleasure. Sufficient place in the library for students to read is also important. The type of school (residential or non-residential) an individual attends at both primary and secondary levels can influence the reading habits of the students (Ambigapathy Pandian,

1997b). Residential schools in Malaysia are normally equipped not only with better facilities (including well-stocked libraries) but also with trained and qualified teachers; non-residential schools, on the other hand, are normally stocked with out-dated books and less trained teachers.

School variables have a direct impact on reading habits (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997b). Students who come from schools where the libraries have a greater amount of reading materials as well as stronger peer influence, tend to read greater variety and to be more active in acquiring and spend more time to read (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997b). Students who come from schools where there is more reading area in the library, teacher influence and peer influence tend to be more habitual readers than students who have less of these inducements to read. The availability of a reading area in the library and reading time for the students' increases exposure, and exposure was found to be the strongest determinant of reading habits (Ambigapathy Pandian, 1997b).

The discussion so far has stressed variables at the individual, home and school that impact upon reading practices and cultures in Malaysia. The model below maps some of the key variables that were found to be significant in thinking about reading habits and practices.

## Explanatory Model of Reading Habits

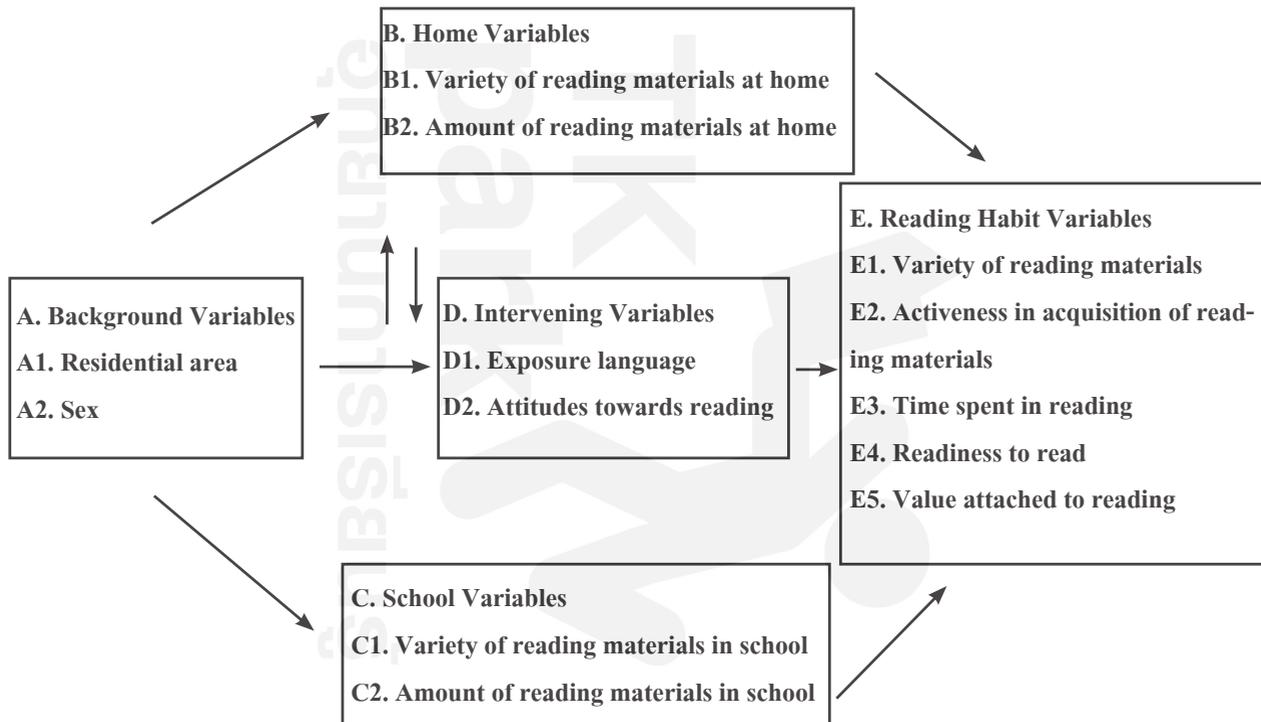


Figure 1: An explanatory model of reading habits

Malaysia aims to emerge as an active global player in world economics, politics and socio-cultural activities and sees reading and literacy as engines that will drive human endeavours and cultures. Knowledge power forms a core developmental strategy as Malaysia is currently seizing the opportunity to harness the powers of information and communication technologies to leapfrog faster into the Information Age. Recognizing that the new times and the new workplace will demand knowledgeable workers in e-business, e-technology, e-culture, e-commerce, e-learning, e-governance, Malaysia aims to promote reading cultures that enable the people to participate actively in their community, government and society at local and global levels (Ambigapathy Pandian & Kell, 2007).

### **Promoting reading practices**

In this section, the initiatives taken by Malaysia to enhance reading practices are offered. Specific Government agencies involved in promoting reading and literacy programmes include the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Information, Communications and Culture. The Community Development Division (KEMAS) of the Ministry of Rural Development has been entrusted to eradicate illiteracy among adults in Peninsular Malaysia. Even though the illiteracy rate is low, it is deemed that there is a need to formulate and implement lifelong education programmes. Amongst the initiatives undertaken by literacy agencies in addressing illiteracy are the Harmonious Family Education Programme, Religious Education Programme, Skill Training Programme, Community Resource Center and Reading Programme, Functional Literacy Program Functional Literacy Programme and Preschool Programme. Through these programmes, the learners are able to gain knowledge and skills to enable them to be a literate productive citizen. The literacy and non-formal education programmes undertaken by government agencies focuses on

teaching and learning in groups and classes held in places and times convenient to the participants. Participants in a class or group may not be fewer than fifteen. The curriculum of this activity covers reading, writing and arithmetic, and aspects of family life, health, economy, civic duty and religion. All teaching, learning and training activities are carried out in a manner suitable to the particular location. In order to ensure that literates do not relapse into illiteracy, the Ministry of Rural Development provides, on a loan basis, reading and learning materials such as books, audio tapes, posters and educational games for the rural communities.

The Ministry of Education, meanwhile, initiated reading programmes for both primary and secondary schools in Malaysia named as NILAM (Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca – The Pulse of Knowledge is through Reading) where students are required to follow the reading activities in schools. This programme aims to encourage and inculcate the love for reading among students and to encourage schools to continuously generate creative and innovative ideas to nurture reading habits. The programme also builds skills and interests in reading so that students learn to adopt reading as a habit.

There are three elements to this programme:

- (a) Reading Records: Each student records books read in a month.
- (b) Confirmation of reading: Teachers confirm records of pupils' reading.
- (c) Recognition: Recognition in the form of certificates is given to students based on the number of books read.

This programme has been successful and encouraged students to borrow books from the School Resource Centre, the library or other sources. In addition, the students were found to share books with their friends and family.

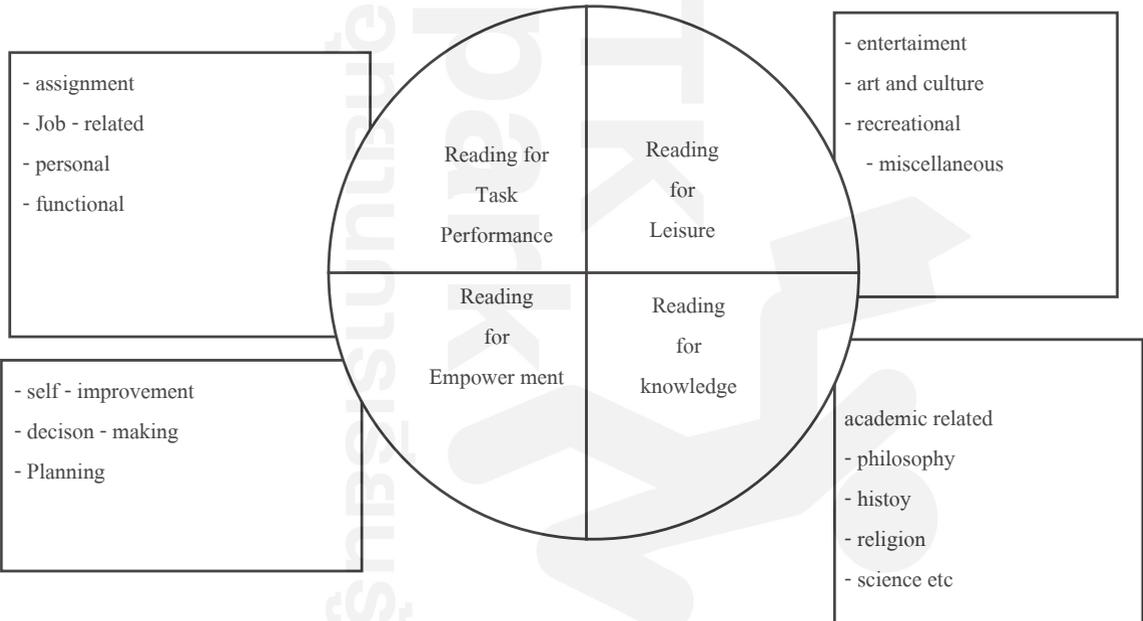
The role of the library is a critical in every community. The Malaysian National library under the Ministry of Information, Communications and Culture arranges numerous reading activities to attract public participation in reading activities. The reading club

organises reading/spelling competitions, forums and story-telling discussions to inspire reading interest among the Malaysian people. The Read Malaysia has been launched to cultivate a lifelong reading culture by promoting book exhibitions, book talks and seminars. Also, the National Library has established networks, partnerships, state agency collaboration, publications, and individual artist programmes to promote local authors.

The School of Languages, Literacies and Translation (SoLLaT), housed at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) engages with student, staff and public participation in reading activities. The Integrated Quality Reading Approach (IQRA) was launched in 2009 to connect the university with communities in reading activities by offering book clubs, film series, and school-based reading programmes at schools, workplaces and other community centers (Ambigapathy Pandian et al., 2009).

Underlying theoretical framework for IQRA are socio-cultural theories of reading as postulated by Vygotsky. This develops the premise that humans are essentially social animals who map their understanding of the world via a complex process of reading, interaction, negotiation and transaction of opinions and ideas which are received, contemplated upon, understood and eventually internalised. IQRA's operational principles are also consistent with those of the socio-cultural approach as explicated extensively by (McVee, Gavelek, & Dunsmore, 2007). Firstly, the community learning paradigm as rendered in the socio-cultural perspective is in line with the idea that reading activities take place within small groups. Secondly, the IQRA framework is also based on the exchange of ideas, open debate and critical exchange of views. Viewed from this perspective, the reader in an IQRA framework invariably navigates through the Vygotskian (L. S. Vygotsky, 1978); (L. S. Vygotsky, 1987) space of public, private and social through scholarly debates. Thirdly, IQRA is inextricably linked to the ability to promote reading and knowledge acquisition within a community learning environment.

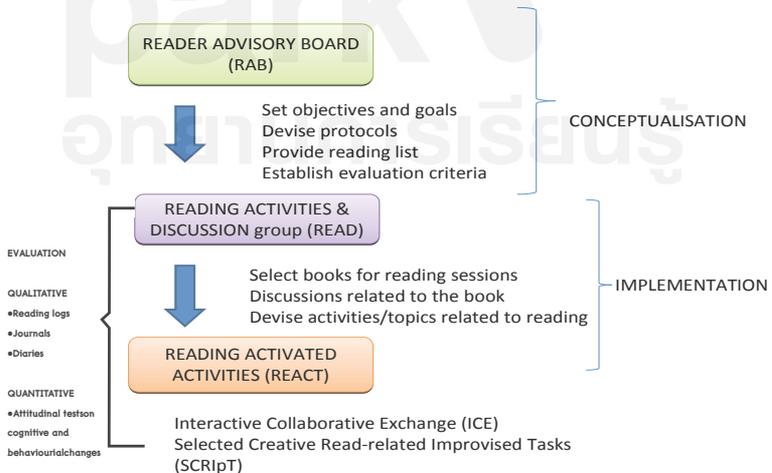
IQRA advances reading as a social process that involves reading for task performance, reading for leisure, reading for knowledge and reading for empowerment as seen in Figure 2.



Essentially, the strength of IQRA resides in its inherent flexibility as it can be tailored according to the type of target reading community and their specific reading needs. Secondly, the empowering features of IQRA are set in motion as readers are provided flexibility and autonomy over their reading needs. Another feature of IQRA is its informal mode in its operation and in planning schedules. Thirdly, the social transformational aspect of IQRA is intrinsically embedded in its informal framework that encourages the exchange of ideas across class, racial and cultural divides.

Apart from the above, IQRA is essentially a social empowering tool of economic mobility as it enables previously knowledge deficient communities to acquire new information and to scaffold it onto existing knowledge. Finally, IQRA is more skewed towards

nurturing the qualitative aspect of reading (i.e., the development of critical reading, the utilisation of the cognitive and affective aspect in analysing texts and in formulating critical insights (Ambigapathy Pandian, et al., 2009).



The first step involves the establishment of a steering committee known as the Reader Advisory Board which is basically responsible for determining the goals and objectives of the club as well as determining a subset of values for enculturation during community reading sessions. Additionally, the RAB is also tasked with formulating the reading protocols for the conduct of Book Club meetings. As the RAB contains the relevant stakeholders in the program, the views and needs of the target recipient is given due consideration. Since IQRA is also a tool for achieving institutional goals, a two-way transactional channel is established wherein both the target recipient's needs and that of the institution can be negotiated.

The second step involves text selection by the Reading Activity and Discussion (READ) group based on the list of values issued by the RAB. This empowering procedure is designed to foster a sense of involvement and ownership amongst the Target Reading Community who will inevitably be the clientele of the programme. Further, by direct involvement in the selection process, the TRCs are indirectly liberated from ideological constraints that invariably underpin top-down implementation frameworks. In addition, the READ is also empowered in charting the modalities of the post reading activities consistent with the import of the text read. This synergistic leveraging of READ is primarily designed to exploit their insider knowledge of the text and use it as an input when charting their post reading activities.

The third step involves the reading stage which involves the meeting of the TRC within an informal and relaxed ambience in which the attendant transactional while reading and post-reading activities are conducted within a community learning paradigm. During this stage the protocols outlined by the Reader Advisory Board (RAB) are practiced and the activities are focused on discussing various aspects of the text. In built into this component are thought provoking activities such as Post-Reading Activated Response (PAR), Interactive Collaborative Exchange (ICE), and Suggested

Creative Read-related Improvised Tasks (SCRIPt) designed to elicit reader responses and gauge his inner understanding/misunderstanding of the text as well as provide him a forum to test his postulations within the public sphere as envisaged under the 4 stage recursive Vygotskian paradigm (McVee, et al., 2007) and (Forman & Cazden, 2004).

The Book Club was launched to enhance the quality of personal, workplace and social life. The book club project is based on the belief that effective reading and critical thinking skills are essential in an evolving global environment. The idea behind the BOOK Club@SoLLaT, USM, is rooted in a desire to inculcate reading habits and to instill strong relationships between members of the USM community, consequently creating a well-informed society. In addition, a book trading network through the BOOK Club@SoLLaT, USM will provide a platform for interested parties to exchange their used books for other books, or purchase other titles at a very reasonable price. The BOOK Club@SoLLaT, USM would also act as a book bank made up of contributions by individuals, libraries, bookstores, and other organisations.

The objective of the BOOK Club@SoLLaT,USM is not only to assist students in developing good reading habits but also to help them acquire better reading skills. It is also envisioned that the BOOK Club@SoLLaT would create initiatives to sustain and nurture reading habits among USM students. Consequently, this book club initiative will create partnerships among universities, libraries, and organisations within the community. This hybrid effort will facilitate the consistent use of reading resources available in the country on a larger scale, which will in turn create a more knowledge driven society.

The university has also worked with the Penang Reading Council to enhance literacy among numerous communities in Penang. These projects include research, policy

development and planning intervention strategies. Some of these strategies are Enhancing Teacher Professionalism; Workshops on curriculum development, classroom research; Module-writing and critical reading skills for teachers, education officials and community leaders; Publication of workbook and resources materials by teachers; Literacy conferences and Dissemination of literacy ideas and action plans.

With English becoming a dominant global language, the command and mastery of this language has been imperative for active participation in the global economy. Clearly there was a need to engage reading in English so that the people could participate in human interaction, reflection and knowledge production in local communities.

It is also important to sustain minority and other languages as a core part of local literary scenario so reading materials in these languages are continuously promoted. Rapid changes in the learning environment required teachers to continually rediscover and renew their skills, specifically with new media technologies. In this regard, Penang Reading Council's programmes has acted as guide to solve teachers professional problems in the area of literacy, feel better about their practices and gain learning benefits for students.

### **Positive Outcomes and constraints**

The participants from the various programmes of IQRA opined that they had accumulated several benefits from their involvement in the above activities. These are summarized below:

- Relaxed and informal ambience gave them an opportunity to interact with colleagues/peers in a less inhibitive manner
- Collegiality was at its peak as the participants perceived a sense friendship and comradeship akin to that felt by members of a family unit

- Motivated to find ways on how to connect the social problems they read to their teaching and learning scenario. For instance; they sensed they were more critical of how information was transmitted and processed.

- Learnt about the need for openness in communication in order to avoid misunderstanding.

- Morale boosted through participation in activities as they felt their views were valued and there was mutual respect accorded to all.

- Increase in motivation as voicing opinions and feelings regarding certain issues had an empowering effect.

- Provided participants with a period of reflection and self analyse their actions in relation to the text read.

- Improvement in reading, speaking and writing skills. Participants logged their improvements in their reading log.

- It provided a platform to meet and exchange ideas. Motivated to offer viewpoints and explore insights within a communal learning environment.

- It offered a better understanding of the other participants in terms of cultures and lifestyles.

- Gained deeper insights into text deconstruction and reconstruction.

- Reading activities enabled participants to relate incidents and content to ideologies, socio-cultural factors etc.

Despite the general success of the IQRA initiative, several constraints were encountered during the implementation phase. They are discussed below:

### **Differences in Proficiency Levels**

One of the obvious constraints encountered was the difference in proficiency levels which impeded discussion sessions and the free exchange of ideas. This problem was especially prevalent amongst participants with poor command of the English language. We overcame this problem by including Malay language texts.

### **Schedule Constraints**

Initially, the IQRA schedule was not suitable for many teachers and family members as they were fatigued after a day's work and had to fulfill family commitments. This essentially procedural drawback threatened to curtail the programme's. Through discussions, the participants came to a consensus that they would conduct the sessions during lunch-break. Furthermore, to lend an air of friendliness to the discussion sessions, they also decided to bring along takeaways and packed food and conduct the session within a potluck ambience.

### **Acceptance of the IQRA approach**

One of the main impediments faced involved motivating members to embrace the Integrative Quality Reading Approach in order to improve their critical literacy skills (Ambigapathy Pandian, et al., 2009). Initial resistance was encountered due to the novelty factor as well as anxiety stemming from a lack of understanding of the activities. To highlight the efficacy of IQRA as an alternative learning platform we encouraged readers to maintain a reading log that will detail their progress in language acquisition, classroom/workplace productivity as well in the development of critical literacy.

### **Participant Interest**

One of the main challenges was the maintenance of participant interest in the programme over the long term. We addressed these concerns by constantly diversifying post reading activities through the inclusion of personal interpretative text dramatization, social engagement with external communities from different social strata, creative writing activities and other fun activities that broke the monotony of discussion based activities.

### **Enrolment into IQRA**

A major problem we encountered was encouraging enrolment into IQRA given that the Book Club approach had to compete with attractions afforded by New Media. Our solution lay in creating a sense of special belonging through specially designed paraphernalia like t-shirts, mugs, caps and an embossed book discount cards that conferred IQRA an air of exclusivity. We augmented these attractions by constructing a relaxed and informal clubhouse ambience. Our tailoring of IQRA to the Malaysian context was furthered via a replication of the famed “sit-eat-talk’ Malaysian culture through the provision of food and drinks, potluck sessions etc. We are also in the midst of designing an online virtual book club forum to enable the exchange of views via electronic means.

### **Accessibility and Affordability Issues**

One constraint which we fortunately did not encounter but may prove an obstacle for other interested parties is the lack of accessible to reading material especially in Third World reading environments. In fact, accessibility is very much intertwined with affordability concerns as quality reading material are often priced beyond the means of the average consumer due to currency differentials, taxation issues and income capacities. Invariably, these barriers stifle the development of reading communities like IQRA in other contexts. While these problems can be difficult in certain situations, they can be eased through the use of alternative reading materials sourced from newspapers, magazines, travelogues etc.

### **School-based difficulties**

At the school level, there are many challenges that are confronted in promoting reading practices. The lack of motivation and skills in the collection of reading material, poor infrastructure in many homes and schools posed major difficulties for parents, teachers and researchers. Teachers face dilemma with limited resources, little recognition

and time constraints as they rush to finish syllabus with little time and motivation to develop innovative teaching and learning resources. More significantly, teachers have to influence the attitude and mind-set of students who are more interested in new media, gaming, cinema, songs and popular culture.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to provide an outlook on reading by first examining the changing landscape of surrounding us especially with the rise of new technologies. It has described some of reading realities faced in the Malaysian scenario and the key aspects that have driven the agenda on reading at the individual, family and school settings. The decline of reading habits and practices in the past few decades emerged as a concern. In addition the reading reluctance dimension emerged as another feature demanding attention in building a nation of participatory citizens making informed decisions. The rise of English Language in a globalised era has also indicated the need to promote reading in English so that there can be productive interactions and knowledge making communities at both the local and global levels.

The contemporary times marked a changing global communications environment amidst increasing diversities in the history and culture of learning communities and this meant a strong agenda on promoting reading practices is a critical plan that requires immediate attention. The focus on reading is essential to facilitate the participation of the Malaysian people decision-making, knowledge production, business and international relations at the personal level, school or workplace and at the public domains. Malaysia recognised that reading and literacy forms a core component in enabling Malaysian learners to engage with differences, change and innovation in the local and world arena.

The transformation of learning settings is becoming increasingly important and the move towards a knowledge society would demand that we problematise our ideas and practices in the arena of reading practices and address life-long learning and other new demands of learning that are suited to specific needs. Evidently, the changes in the learning process have to be supported with proper policy measures at the level of national government as well as interested parties at the local levels. Providing better access to reading resources at the home front and at schools is an essential first step. It is also important to transform management of teaching institutions. More importantly, there is a need to change the role of parents, teachers and educators and the need to situate the learning process within the needs and interests of the society so that reading becomes meaningfully connected to the societal needs of the information society.

The growing significance of multimodal information and communication systems push for a more adequate response to new social practices of reading. Many literacy policies and programmes from a number of government agencies have been organised to cultivate a lifelong reading culture and to pave new ways of participating as citizens in public spaces and in new forms of establishing, identity, lifestyles and personality. The Malaysian education terrain also conceived many plans and initiatives at the primary and secondary school levels to inculcate reading cultures among young people so that learners develop the necessary knowledge, creative and thinking capacities that they would need to confront challenges in the increasingly diverse lifeworlds that they inhabit.

The transformative feature of the IQRA approach that engages individuals, the home and the school at different levels and the activities of the BOOK Club@ SoLLAT should be viewed as challenges for researchers, teachers, practitioners and policy-makers in search of new ways of linking reading practices to the citizenry

narratives of human experiences. This will, however, need greater linkages and networking with the Malaysian authorities in terms of the sharing of this idea, materials, information, training and human resources.

The above discussion shows the vigorous resourcefulness and potential as well as the challenges for the involvement of reading-interest groups in creating literate environments for lifelong learning. It also shows that investing in books and reading resources is at the heart of educational and social reform, literacy enhancement and sustaining literacy skills for life, leading subsequently to a better quality of life.

Malaysia has received many plans and initiatives that would equip learners in the new millennium with reading practices and multi-literate skills they would need to confront challenges in the increasingly diverse lifeworld. While much is being discussed and planned in transforming reading habits the constraints and inadequacies of traditional schooling and the absence of reading role models in homes still pose barriers to efforts undertaken to achieve transformed learning practices that will support readers to adopt new ways of reading to enhance capacity, to participate in civic life and to nurture personal growth. Clearly, there is a need for greater linkages and networking with the Malaysian authorities in terms of sharing new ideas, materials, information, training and human resources. Only through this will it mark a beginning of a lifelong learning process that will enable learners in our communities to become not just passive spectators and consumers of knowledge, but reflective and active knowledge producing citizens of the world.

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## Every Filipino Child a Reader

25 August 2011

By Neni Sta. Romana Cruz

*“When you give someone a book,  
you don’t give him just paper, ink, and glue,  
You give him the possibility of a whole new life.” Christopher Morley*

When the new school year began in June this year, media reported the typical and well-known information in tired and familiar terms. It was a time that again emphasized the usual problems in the Philippine public school system, often described as “overburdened and under-resourced”. And the litany talked about the following: not enough classrooms for student enrollment, overcrowded classrooms, large class sizes, not enough teachers, not enough textbooks, poor quality of available textbooks, less than ideal classroom settings, increasing enrollment of former private school students in public schools because of their lower tuition fees, increasing dropout rates.

Not all was dismal news, however. The good news was that the 2011 budget of the Department of Education has increased to a record Php 192 billion, 52% more than the Php 122 billion budget in 2006. However, this is not sufficient to address the herculean problems facing the Philippine public school educational system. Elementary education is free and compulsory, while secondary education is also free but not compulsory in public high schools.

We cannot talk literacy without talking of the setting, the backdrop against which this is happening—or not occurring at all.

Based on SY 04-05 data for public schools, the dropout rate begins to be marked from as early as Gr. 1 to Gr. 2 because of health and nutrition problems due to poverty.

From a 100% enrollment rate in Grade 1 to 68.38% in Grade 6, there was a decline each year because of poor comprehension skills and inability to succeed in school—the main problems are in reading, math, and science. In HS Year 4, the enrollment rate plunged to 42.50%, with only 14% graduating from college. The statistics are alarming and disheartening, to say the least. The country's old boast of being one of the most highly educated developing countries with high enrollment rates at all levels is no longer true. More disturbing than the completion rate is the poor quality of teaching and learning. It is apparent that reading proficiency is the key to early literacy success and eventual success in school and the work world.

Keeping the students in school is however, a success that will breed new problems. What a contradiction that keeping the children in school will compound current shortages. By improving retention in school, there will be an additional 1-1.2 million children in the system.

Part of the 10-point agenda for Basic Education Reform of the Aquino administration is to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere in the country, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Most relevant to us is the education reform that states that every child must be a reader by Grade 1 by the end of the Aquino administration in 2016. With the introduction of the mandatory pre-schooling in June this year, the goal which is dependent on a full year of Kindergarten is to initially make every child a reader by Grade 3, then Grade 2, then Grade 1. The necessary infrastructure to make this happen has to be in place: libraries, reading books, teachers trained in teaching reading. Indeed, this seems like an ambitious plan, but something very possible.

This education reform builds and improves on the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP) launched by the Department of Education in 2001 which targeted Grade 3 as the level by which every child must be a successful reader-sometimes described as the zero nonreaders goal by Grade 4. In recent discussions, Grade course,

has been found too late in the elementary level, especially with the introduction of the Kindergarten program. A goal as ambitious and all-encompassing as that entails major institutional reforms, the accompanying infrastructure, and the much needed teacher training for more effective reading instruction. To echo the prevailing observation about such initiatives from the Department of Education: there is no denying that we have numerous pockets of excellence going on, but not a mandated standard, uniform, sustainable program that every one adheres to. What we have on hand instead, are different initiatives from different divisions around the country: a catalog of Best Reading Practices and Reading Intervention Projects from 30 schools in 17 regions as of March 2010. Thus, a decade after the launch of this very catchy Every Child a Reader slogan, our achievement scores remain nothing to crow about.

The Every Child a Reader Program has spawned two major programs, which hopefully, are helpful for future planning in classrooms and on the national level and do not just generate more clerical work for the already overworked, underpaid public school teachers. The first is the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory, the assessment component of ECARP which is done by the teachers one on one especially for the oral reading portion. The second program has yet to take off in more schools, as it has only piloted in one school as of today. It is the New Zealand Reading Recovery Program for Grade 1 students, a short-term, school-based intervention program for low literacy achievers. It involves intensive one-to-one lessons for 30 minutes a day with a trained literacy teacher for an average period of 20 weeks. Public school teachers have been selected to train for this in New Zealand and in turn, train their colleagues in the Philippines.

But certainly, more important, more critical than all these is the DepEd directive from 2001 that every student should show written or oral evidence of having read at least two books a year, one per semester prior to promotion to the next level. It is specified that the books referred to are not textbooks and that one be in English and the other in the vernacular or the mother tongue. It does not seem a big task, but

considering the limitations the public school system grapples with, it is far from easy.

Another important education reform that directly relates to reading is the medium of instruction used in schools. President Aquino refers to an ambitious tri-lingual approach that poses a challenge: “learn English well to connect to the world, learn Filipino well to connect to the country, retain your mother tongue to connect to your heritage.” It improves on the bilingual policy as medium of instruction because the majority of students do not have the background in English and Filipino, the national language to succeed in either language. It is now recognized and buttressed by research and empirical evidence that the use of the mother tongue in the early grades promotes better learning of subject areas and also of English and Filipino. We should build on the cultural and linguistic diversity of Philippine society, rather than view it as a liability. It is the richness of our cultural heritage and the archipelagic geography of the country’s 7100 islands that has given us over 120 distinct languages and eight major regional languages which are widely spoken.

The one-year old Aquino administration is working on badly needed reforms in the educational system. For school year 2011-12, Education Secretary Br. Armin Luistro FSC announced the formal implementation of the first-ever universal public kindergarten program for 5-year olds which will better prepare the children for the rigors of formal schooling. At least one million (1.12 to be exact) preschoolers signed up for this. This is the initial step under the K+12 program which will add two years to the present Basic Education Curriculum of six years of elementary and four years of high school. This measure is seen as a vital step that will solve deficiencies in the competencies in the core subjects of English, Math, and Science among a majority of high school graduates, as well as gain recognition for Filipino professionals among employers abroad. To date, the Philippines is one of only two countries in the world with a ten-year basic education curriculum, the other being Myanmar. An obvious consequence of the ten-year curriculum is the unwillingness of companies abroad to hire graduates of the abbreviated program. The K+12 program should make our graduates more globally competitive.

The results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) for Grade 6 in the SY 2009-10 reflected a passing rate of only 69.21%. This already marked a 24% improvement over the 2005-06 passing rate, but shows that reforms are still urgently needed to achieve substantial improvement.

How does one promote the love and habit of reading in a setting like the Philippines today? Two foundations I work with—the Philippine Board on Books for Young People or the PBBY and the Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation are both impassioned with the crusade to make every Filipino child not only learn to read but love to read.

For many years, in the course of teacher training for public school teachers, I would talk endlessly about my favorite award winning books in children's literature from developed countries and of late, from Philippine children's titles. Then I realized how futile it all seemed: how dare I preach about the love of reading when the students did not have books to learn to read with in the first place? How can one talk about love for reading when the students could not even read and in fact hated reading because their reading classes only meant learning meaningless words and endless worksheets? It was not as if the teachers deliberately meant to make the classes so tedious--they just had neither the resources nor the knowhow to do otherwise. How could I convince the teachers about the books I love when these were so alien, so inaccessible to them? Where was the joy to be found in all that?

One could not help but empathize with the public school teachers who work long hours during the day and on into the night because they have to write out long detailed plans that their administrators require. That meant they were too tired to teach the next day and yet, had to contend with students who cannot learn because they have not had a decent meal and often number more than 60 in classrooms which are certainly less than ideal. How promising those teachers were, but how they lacked the exposure and the professional development opportunities to be excellent teachers. Bless those teachers who remain cheerful and steadfast in their jobs and who have not

lost the sense of humor (and sanity, too) as they tell me that their take-home pay cannot even take them home.

In the spirit of transparency, I must say at the outset that three of the foundations I will talk about whose main advocacy is literacy and reading promotion are also those I have been closely associated with. The Philippine Board on Books for Young People (PBBY) is a private, non-stock, non-profit organization representing a multisectoral group of writers, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, educators, book reviewers, librarians, researchers, storytellers, reading advocates, and mass media representatives committed to the development of children's literature in the country and promoting reading among our children. It is the Philippine National Section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), a world organization founded in Zurich in 1953 that promotes international understanding through children's books. I represent the book reviewers sector on the board—not that this is a large sector in the country—and once chaired the PBBY. It is the lead agency in celebrating National Children's Book Day every third Tuesday in July, the date especially selected as it is the anniversary of the publication of Jose Rizal's "The Monkey and the Turtle" in Trubner's Oriental Record, a London publication. Yes, Rizal also dabbled in children's literature, even sketching and translating Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales for his nephews and nieces back home during his long years of exile in Europe. Thus, it is appropriate that our poster and theme this year features him with much gratitude as Grandpa Pepe (the affectionate nickname for Jose): One who reads; someone who is read.

This year marks the sesquicentennial birth anniversary of our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, an intellectual genius, a true bibliophile, and a man of many talents whose novels written in Spanish, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* were milestones towards the country's independence from the shackles of colonial rule, 300 years from the Spaniards and 30 years from the United States. His novels

were initially considered seditious material, anti-clerical as they narrated excesses of the Spanish governor-generals and the clergy. *Noli Me Tangere* is Latin for “Don’t touch me/Touch me not”, recorded in the Bible as the words Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalen after His resurrection, while *El Filibusterismo* has the alternative English title of *The Reign of Greed*, while the Spanish word, *filibustero* means “a revolutionary suspect, a subversive.” You can now understand and appreciate why the Spaniards banned the book. And curiously enough, even in the 1950s, our lawmakers had heated arguments about whether these are worthy and suitable reading materials in school. Today, they are required reading, but how to make them palatable for today’s youth is another issue altogether. A recent sesquicentennial celebration was the mass recitation of Rizal’s “*Mi Ultimo Adios*” (“*My Last Farewell*”) sponsored by Instituto Cervantes in Manila. A few years back, there was a marathon reading of Rizal’s novels with celebrities invited to read a chapter each, organized by the National Book Development Board.

**Sa Aklat Sisikat**, (“Books make you cool” or “Books make you shine” is the loose translation) Foundation where I have been a trustee since its inception over a decade ago, in collaboration with the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd), it has been running innovative Reading Programs and Teacher Training Workshops for the last eleven years. DepEd has publicly recognized it as its longest running nongovernment partner in literacy. The foundation’s reason for existence is to build a nation of readers and to develop in the public school children the love and habit of reading. SAS is accredited by the DepEd to implement reading interventions in the public elementary school system, under the Adopt-A-School Program. SAS’ s focal activity is the implementation of the 31-day Reading Program. The Reading Program comes in three major parts: the Teacher Training Workshop, the Read-A- Thon, and the “Celebrate Reading” culminating activity.

To begin the SAS Reading Program, SAS brings together the Grade 4 teachers and principals from each of the participating schools for a two-day weekend teacher-training workshop, prior to the implementation of the Read-A-Thon. The workshop is designed to further enhance the teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching, especially teaching reading as well as to impart innovative, creative strategies and activities they can use in the classroom both during and after the Reading Program. SAS believes that teachers are the key reading advocates in public schools. At the end of the weekend, each participant takes home the SAS Teacher Training Manual which contains all the strategies and activities covered during the workshop. It is a reference for the teachers as they implement the program in their schools.

The novel and enjoyable Read-A-Thon presents reading in another light to the students. It is not tedious as the usual reading lessons go, is more a game than a lesson and presents a set of 60 storybooks in color, all recent Philippine publications, for every class to use for 31 schooldays. Consider what a rare treat that is for the students who do not even have their own textbooks. I can never forget the comment of a boy who held the new book lovingly and smelled it, because he had never even had that pleasurable sensory experience. As the name implies, it is a reading race, with an accompanying progress chart to check on individual student performance and a Reading Passport for every child to record books read, for which different activities must be done. Completed activities give the students the right to paste a paper feather on the Ibong Adarna (a mythical Philippine bird) mural. At the end of the 31 days, the schools in the city plan a final activity to celebrate reading.

Why 31 days and why Grade 4? SAS researched this before plunging into the program which is quite costly and labor-intensive, with the teacher training, the sets of books, the monitoring team during the implementation phase. Based on scientific evidence, it takes the continuous and consecutive practice of a routine 21 to 28 times for a habit to be established. In this case, for the love and habit of reading to

be part of one's life. The habit is of course best nurtured in the youth and is all about creating a desire to read.

Grade 4 was the particular academic group chosen because according to the Department of Education, this grade level is critical in the development of functional literacy. This is the age when the child begins to read comfortably and intervention at this point proves to be more effective in terms of developing the love and habit of reading and preventing school dropouts.

I am particularly proud of SAS because of its track record—its performance for the past 11 years, never losing its passion, its particular advocacy but only continuing to refine its program. It is the only one of its kind accredited by the Department of Education. It is sustainable through the years, having been integrated into the curricula of partner schools so that it takes the place of the usual language arts curriculum for the month—a major breakthrough in itself if one considers the bureaucracy to hurdle to achieve that. It provides professional support for its teachers with regular enrichment, workshops, a yearly weekend conference for reading advocates, and the publication of a glossy distributed free of charge to its partner schools, Star Teacher.

Through its reading program from 1999 to the last school year, SAS has served 868 public schools, benefitting of 24,619 teachers and touching the minds of over one million Filipino students nationwide. SAS has also distributed almost 181,000 children's books.

As SAS marked its tenth year, it wanted to know the affectivity of its program and embarked on a self-evaluation survey in partnership with a highly respected third party expert, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), Columbia University and the Department of Education. J-PAL's objective is to improve the effectiveness of poverty programs by providing policy makers with clear scientific results that help shape successful policies and it has provided research data for the likes of Warren Buffett and Bill Gates for their

philanthropy programs. This independent study which began in 2009 and concluded in 2011 is the first of its kind among literacy initiative groups in the country. For every phase of the study, doctoral students and other representatives came from the US to personally run and monitor the surveys which were conducted for 100 schools in Tarlac, a province north of Manila, as it was deemed a microcosm of the country.

The results of the study have been positive and encouraging, a validation of the efforts of SAS: basically, that the short-term SAS reading program is an effective way of “cultivating good reading habits in children and, hence, improving their reading ability.” The age-appropriate books improved reading skills and the program had the largest and most persistent effect on word recognition and boosted the reading habits of students, even outside school.

Emboldened by the positive results of the MIT J-PAL Survey Study, SAS is finalizing its plans and the software to translate its face-to-face modules into an online teacher training program to broaden its reach. This new initiative is called the Computer Access Mentorship Program (CAMP).

In 2010, the Republic of Korea’s e-Asia and Knowledge Partnership Fund awarded a grant to SAS, through the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The grant is dedicated to the development of an online teacher training program, as well as to the creation of 25 computer labs across the Philippines dedicated to this purpose.

CAMP will be implemented by SAS over a period of three consecutive years, in coordination with the Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP). The computer labs, or ‘CAMP Sites’, are located in BSP Council Offices and will serve as a venue for 9,000 elementary school teachers to learn new and innovative teaching methods through the online, in- service program. The program will be aimed specifically at the improvement of the teacher’s skills in the teaching of reading and to make it available to as many teachers as possible.

Another new endeavor of SAS is the Kinder College public preschool teacher-training conference which grew out of a sponsor’s interest in preschool

education. There is heightened interest in preschool education as I mentioned earlier as it became mandatory this schoolyear which began in June with the government doing something about the knowledge that this promotes literacy and prepares the learner better for formal elementary school education. Previous to this, only the children of the families that could afford preschool education had this rather unfair advantage.

It is a welcome development that a sister of President Benigno Aquino, Jr, Pinky Aquino Abellada has been focusing her efforts on building preschool classrooms and supplying these with preselected books and school supplies through the AGAPP Foundation and its Silid Pangarap program, which can be translated either as Room of Dreams or a Dream Room. The foundation acronym stands for Aklat, Gabay at Aruga Tungo sa Pag-angat at Pag-asa. In English, it means books, teacher training, feeding, livelihood and parenting support programs towards a better quality of life and hope. In partnership with the Department of Education, its goal was to build 100 preschools during the first year of the Aquino administration which began on June 30, 2010. And they managed—with the 100th launched in mid-June. For Year 2 of the project, it hopes to build 150 more preschools, focus on the feeding, livelihood and parenting support programs and develop performance tracking systems for teaching skills and the performance of the students. The program is encouraged by reports that Kindergarten enrollment has gone up from 30 to 60% in their classrooms. As photos will attest, existing old structures or new classrooms have been transformed into the learning wonderlands that they should be. What better testimonials are there than the retiring DepEd personnel in the southern province of Leyte who was brought to tears upon seeing the inviting colorful classrooms, as she never imagined she would ever see anything like that in her career. In a northern province, Cagayan, some children planning to enroll in private kindergarten classes switched to Silid Pangarap instead. It is a tremendous boost that a presidential sister has taken this initiative because sponsors have not been difficult to get.

If SAS targets Grade 4 students and AGAPP, Preschool students, two other foundations have other grade levels for their target beneficiaries.

The Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) –yes, even McDonald’s!–with its banner program Bright Minds Read (BMR) began in 2002 for beginning readers. It was determined to focus on Grade 1 after it found out that only 4% of public school students in the grade level could read. Partnering with the Department of Education, reading toolkits were developed by reading specialists—these were made up of 33 big storybooks, 28 books in Filipino, 5 books in English; student workbooks with 200 activity sheets for the 33 storybooks; teacher’s lesson plans, all geared at helping teach basic reading, building comprehension and enriching language skills of students. These kits may be shared among classes, so there is one BMR kit for every participating school. Training of public school teachers, supervisors and principals is an important component of the BMR program. To date, over 2,700 public elementary schools—the ones recommended as most needy-- in 17 regions are equipped with BMR kits. These kits are not meant to be supplementary materials but used in Filipino classes since they were designed under the Basic Education Curriculum of the Department of Education.

The program is guided by four objectives of beginning reading: development of a genuine love for reading, the development of comprehension and critical thinking skills, oral language development, and the development of decoding skills. Now on its ninth year, BMR measures its effectivity through the increase in the number of schools and students participating in the program and in the results of the pretests and posttests administered

In surveying the existing literacy programs for the various grade levels, the Union Bank of the Philippines Corporate Philanthropy and Social Responsibility (CPSR) Program found that NGOs did not have programs for Gr. 2 students. It decided to sponsor this grade level because it was also deemed the most appropriate

formative grade for values education. At this stage of their school life, students can be best assisted because this is where most of the children are still in school. The dropout rate becomes very high in Grade 4.

The program that was developed carries the title, Developmental Reading Integrated with Values Education for Good Citizenship. It is a complete kit that has a Student's Workbook, a Teacher's Handbook and a Multimedia Teaching Video Set, designed to strengthen basic reading skills and to instill the values enshrined in the Preamble of the 1987 Philippine Constitution – which teaches the readers to be more patriotic and overall more committed and dutiful citizens of the country taking pride in the Filipino heritage. It was developed with the perspective of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of achieving universal primary education, and the Department of Education's goal of zero non-readers through the Every Child a Reader Program.

Every child has his own workbook which will be used with the Reading and Language classes during the school year. For most schools, having a book alone would be a boon since they do not have books in the first place. This year, 533,000 Gr. 2 students from 5,200 schools nationwide on all three major islands of the country will be using these learning materials. Many regional directors have commented that this is the very first time that Gr. 2 students would be holding the same worktext in different parts of the country. DepEd director for the National Capital Region Teresita Domalanta commented: “This program improved not only pupil but teacher performance as well. It was the first time in the history of the entire Philippine educational system that the school children signed ownership on a book that was personally issued free to each child....”

The worktext follows the DepEd's requirements for a full school year curriculum in English and Reading and may also be integrated into the other subject areas. The exercises were written based on the DepEd's Philippine Education Learning Competencies and the official work requirements. An important goal of the program

program is to develop independent readers for a very practical and realistic reason; so that even if they eventually drop out of school, they can still learn to read and survive because of that essential skill. Their belief is: “Reading is a survival skill. If you cannot read, you cannot learn; if you cannot learn, you cannot survive....”

The UnionBank program is now on its fifth year of implementation and has been refined from its initial stage of operations. It has benefitted over 1.4 million Gr. 2 public school students and 24,000 teachers. If it has achieved a degree of success and acceptance, it is because UnionBank consults with the DepEd every step of the way, working with existing programs and procedures. It also shares its best corporate practices with the DepEd: aside from mere financial resources, it applies the cardinal virtues of business: creativity, building community and practical realism. The UnionBank Learning System has been recognized for being the best corporate social responsibility program in education and responsible citizenship.

With the literacy initiatives mentioned above, we can see that K, Grades 1, 2, 4 have special programs dedicated to them. If only every grade would be “adopted” from K to 12! Much more needs to be done.

The Department of Education through a visionary former undersecretary for finance and administration, Juan Miguel Luz conceptualized the idea of Library Hubs all over the country during his tenure. He realized something very basic: if students were to be encouraged to read and to love reading, there had to be an infrastructure for reading in every school. The students needed to have books in their hands. School libraries do not exist in our public school system. If they do, there are neither books anyone would be lured to read nor a librarian to inspire and promote reading. If there were a school librarian, it would be someone about to retire or could no longer stand the rigors of regular classroom teaching. Truly, the least coveted teaching assignment. The Department with its limited resources for a burgeoning population knew that setting up 37,000+ public elementary school libraries for each of its schools would not be economically feasible and would take time.

Thus were Library Hubs born: These are warehouse or wholesale libraries established in different schools divisions in the country to service public elementary and high schools in the division. A division, depending on the particular classification, is made up of a particular number of public schools. The Library Hubs provide supplementary reading materials in plastic bins sorted by grade, subject, and theme in bundles of hundreds in secure plastic storage boxes for school representatives to check out for a month, placed in their respective school library--materials which would otherwise not be accessible to teachers and students. Prior to the opening of the Hubs, teachers are trained on the importance of reading, a variety of reading promotion strategies, and librarians on the cataloging and processing the books. School heads report a remarkable increase in the reading scores in achievement tests of schools serviced by the Library Hubs. Library Hubs are situated in an existing, centrally located building provided by the local government that is especially refurbished for the purpose. The concept and the partnership between DepEd, the local government, and the public sector has been so well received that there is a pending bill in Congress to make the Library Hub concept a legal mandate so that Hubs are institutionalized and built in key cities as well as farflung areas. The law also seeks to mandate the DepEd to create a staff in the Hub: a librarian, an assistant librarian, a library aide, and a utility worker. To date, there are 194 constructed Library Hubs in the country for 117 schools divisions, out of a total of 204 divisions all over the country. Eighty-seven (87) divisions await their own Library Hubs. Some divisions, because of the number of schools they service, have more one Hub.

The plan is not as perfect as it sounds, I have to admit. Book deliveries are delayed, teachers complain that the Hubs are far from their school so that transportation costs are incurred, there are not enough books and also inadequate titles to support the curriculum. But of course, we all know that a library can never have books enough for every interest and inclination. These books have to be regularly maintained and replenished.

In a province south of Metro Manila, Batangas, a private school run by La Salle Christian Brothers in the city of Lipa has a BookMobile & Reading Program (BMRP) for the neediest public elementary schools in the city. The bookmobile provides the students with the library that their schools do not have. Components of the literacy program are: book borrowing privileges, guided reading programs, creative learning experiences through arts and crafts and storytelling, tutorials in English, Math, and Science, values formation, and computer literacy. There is also a training package for Reading teachers which is especially critical as 60% of teachers in 2007 did not have the proficiency in English, the medium of instruction in all public schools. A component for parent involvement is also being developed.

The BMRP envisions that in the near future, we will have public elementary school students who love to read, have the necessary skills in reading, and are well equipped to hurdle the learning process and become successful students.

The National Book Development Board is a government agency under the administrative supervision of the Department of Education responsible for developing and supporting the development of the Philippine book publishing industry. Some of its programs include the following:

- Booklatan sa Bayan (a pun on the word “books” which literally means, “opening up in the nation”) This is a series of training activities and workshops on readership development held nationwide: lectures on Filipino poetry, fiction and nonfiction, and other genres. Storytelling workshops with teachers, librarians, and community workers are also scheduled.

- Philippine Book Development Month in November each year. This is the biggest celebration of books and reading with the Manila International Literary Festival as a major event where distinguished local and foreign writers talk about books, literature, and the craft of writing. In November 2010, it was called LOL, Lit Out Loud! And special guest was Simon Beaufoy, author of Slumdog Millionaire.

- NBDB Book Club Meeting. To promote interest in books written by Filipino authors, the Book Club meets to discuss books by the featured guest author.

- Get Caught Reading. This is a reading campaign of the American Association of Publishers (AAP) in the US which has been replicated by the NBDB, where celebrities are invited to pose for large posters in the act of reading.

- National Book Awards. This is the Philippine book industry's most coveted annual awards established by the Manila Critics Circle in 1981 to honor excellence in book publishing and which the NBDB has chosen to institutionalize through a partnership with the MCC in 2008.

- National Children's Book Awards. This is a collaboration between the NBDB and the Philippine Board on Books for Young People to recognize the country's best children's books. Up to 10 commendable books may be named each time to make up a Best Reads for Children bibliography. In 2010, six books were selected for the first NCBA.

- Bookwatch. This is the official magazine of the NBDB which documents book-related news and developments.

The Inquirer Read-Along of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the country's leading newspaper was launched in May 2007 as a "simple, low-cost" idea aimed at encouraging public use of the Inquirer Library, according to its research head.

When the sessions first began, they were called "reading sessions" targeted at school children in the hope of getting them started on the habit of reading while still young. In an attempt to make reading fun and attractive to children, Inquirer editor in chief Letty Jimenez Magsanoc renamed the project what it is called today, "Inquirer Read-Along" and suggested that celebrities and role models be invited to read stories to the students in attendance. The hour long sessions, held twice a month, are usually divided into three parts: a read-along with a celebrity or role model, another session with a trained storyteller, and a third one with Junior Inquirer (the children's weekend

supplement of the newspaper) readers who share reading tips with participants. All featured celebrities and personalities from media, sports, music, politics, the academe, the diplomatic corps offer their services free of charge and read largely Philippine children's titles. The sessions are open to the public and held at the Inquirer building in Makati City and to reach out to more children, some sessions have been held in malls, schools and out of town venues. The celebrities are the drawing power—their presence certainly helps, and because the broadsheet daily is the most widely circulated, the idea of a read-along and the virtues of reading itself have gotten the attention and the publicity it needs and it deserves. The project also wants to convey the message that “Reading is fun. Reading is cool. Reading is in.” It is encouraging that from the initial audience of 15 students, attendance has ballooned to about a hundred.

Inquirer has even trained its employees to be hosts, storytellers, coordinators. The readalong model has been replicated especially in areas far from Metro Manila.

I would be remiss if I did not mention other ongoing endeavors that help promote the reading habit. There is the Manila International Book Fair (MIBF) held every year in September for at least five days, now on its 32nd year. If one had any doubts that Filipinos are booklovers, this event will dispel all that. MIBF has become a yearly tradition with a record attendance of more than eighty five thousand people for the week and over three hundred local and foreign book exhibitors. The organizers, like the Book Development Association of the Philippines, Asian Catholic Communicators, Inc., Philippine Booksellers Association, Inc., and the Overseas Publishers' Representatives Association of the Philippines admit the challenges facing the printed word with the advent of other reading platforms. But they vow that for as long as the written word thrives in any medium, the MIBF will continue its legacy of promoting the love for reading.

There is also the growing popularity of a brilliant young illustrator and writer, Jomike Tejido whose two books (Tagu-Taguan, a delightful hide-and-seek counting book and Lub-Dub, Lub-Dub, a book Tejido illustrated) were cited among six books as National Children's Book Award titles in 2010. Engaged in innovative work and using his architecture background, he has been publishing his Foldabots Toy Books which have drawn a large following of avid robot-crazed kids who pore over his stories and in the process of robot construction, cannot help but read "carefully, closely, avidly."

There are the weekly sections in three major national dailies devoted to books and reading: Philippine Daily Inquirer and Philippine Star on Mondays, and the Manila Bulletin on Saturdays. The children's weekly supplements of the Inquirer and the Bulletin do not only feature children's works but also regular book reviews.

Mention must also be made of the Philippine publishers who continue to publish quality books which sell and are well received—despite all the competition that the digital age offers and the successful marketing and promotion strategies that make foreign titles such phenomenon worldwide, including the Philippines which "behaves and consumes books like the American market." That observation was made by Karina Bolasco, publishing manager of Anvil Publishing, Inc., the country's biggest publishing house and eight-time recipient of the Manila Critics Circle's Publisher of the Year Award. Book publishing these days is not such a simple business, when local titles have to compete cheek by jowl with foreign titles. It almost seems like an act of courage for publishing to continue when our local output of titles, excluding school books or text books, was a mere 5900 in 2009 and 5800 in 2010. Children's titles from nine publishers have been less than a hundred the past two years. During her lecture at the recent Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators conference, Bolasco echoed the sentiments of determined book lovers and publishers: ".. as long as we make books that get children to read, this by itself is good, for the habit of reading, unlike other habits like watching television, playing computer games or going to the malls,

is what we aspire to develop among our young as a lifelong habit. Book reading is a virtue unto itself, and if publishers succeed in turning it into a lifelong dependency or addiction, then that should be good, for truly and regrettably, book readers are today an endangered species.”

**Every Filipino** child a reader. Let this be more than beautiful rhetoric. Yes, it all sounds so ambitious and so elusive. But if we do not dream, if we do not try, what are we left with? It is clear that the Department of Education and the limited government budget cannot handle the herculean problems in the public educational system. It needs the private sector and the nongovernment organizations to turn every child to be a reader. There is no time to tarry, though it will take time and effort and much patience—for truly teaching a child to read is much like watching a flower bloom. It will happen, in time.



# **LIBRARIES FOR LIFE**

## **THE SINGAPORE NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD EXPERIENCE**

By

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Libraries are essential cornerstones of any developed society. They serve as gateways to learning and lifelong development of one's skills and knowledge. One needs them and can use them at any stage of life, from formal education in schools and higher learning endeavours to lifelong learning beyond school, right up to one's twilight years. Libraries are neutral places where people from all walks of life can gain access to knowledge and use the knowledge gained to progress oneself through life. Being a public good in most societies, it plays the pivotal role in society of ensuring no one is left behind in the pursuit of knowledge and information for personal advancement. And therefore, libraries are for life.

To illustrate this, we will share with you the Singapore National Library Board's (NLB) experience. As the physical and social landscapes have changed over time in Singapore, libraries have helped to connect individuals to their communities and built stronger bonds between communities and forged a stronger nation as a whole. Our 24 public libraries serve as social touchpoints that provide programmes for community participation and for self enrichment and development. Over time, our libraries have become sanctuaries for all Singaporeans, regardless of age, race, language, occupation, education level and religion.

Despite IT advancement and digital media, Singaporeans still embrace our physical network of libraries. Our customer satisfaction surveys show that our customers rate an overall of 4.33 out of 5 for their satisfaction level of our libraries. Each year, our libraries see a total of about 37 million visitors and book loan steadily increased to 33 million in FY10 from just 27 million in FY05. Participation in library programmes is also at an all-time high as library users today seek more experiential learning, coupled with learning and reading from books to engage them.

Surveys we have done also show that many Singaporeans are spending more time in libraries with their young families, teenagers study in the library while retirees and senior citizens pass their time reading and attending library programmes, relevant to their needs. With this, Singapore's public libraries offer a safe and comfortable space for Singaporeans across generations to spend their time meaningfully, either for leisure and recreation or for self-development and learning.

### **Our Reading Initiatives**

In the past year alone, we have delivered several reading initiatives to Singaporeans to further engage them in reading and learning. This is part of our overall engagement with our users and supports our strategic intent of Libraries for Life. We will share here some of these reading initiatives that have delivered our key outcomes of engagement, reading and learning.

#### **• World Book and Copyright Day : Book Exchange 2011 and**

#### **Spot - The Reader 2011**

In conjunction with World Book and Copyright Day, NLB organised the Book Exchange 2011, which was a one-day event where book lovers can do their part for the environment while indulging in their love of reading. Held for the third

successive year, this event organised by Public Libraries Singapore allowed book lovers to exchange their used books with each other.

More than 7,000 participants took part in this year's edition with an exchange of about 77,000 books. This has allowed both users and non-users of libraries to give their own books a second lease of life and share them with others and for them to get a new collection of books for their own reading, leisure and learning.

Another signature event organised under the World Book and Copyright Day was the Spot-The-Reader 2011. 62 groups of more than 600 volunteers visited 12 shopping malls, markets, hospitals, parks, commercial business districts, town centres, etc on 21 April 2011 from 11am to 3pm to seek out members of the public who are reading and to delight them with a reward of a token. These volunteers were members of various reading clubs, community leaders, student volunteers from schools, and NLB staff. Over a period of 4 hours, the volunteers spotted 6,000 readers (almost a 10% increase over previous year's figure) and had given out 6,000 goodie bags.

Through this movement, we hope to encourage the reader to continue the habit of reading and emphasized the importance of developing lifelong reading habits

#### **• Opening of Two Public Libraries in shopping malls – Serangoon and Clementi**

In the months, of April and May 2011, NLB has opened two new public libraries located in the shopping malls of Serangoon and Clementi, in supporting our new vision of Libraries for Life.

Serangoon Public Library (SRPL) was the first public library in Singapore to have a dedicated area for gaming, SRPL aims to promote learning and a reading culture by tapping on the educational effects of games. The games featured in this area will demonstrate significant educational content or learning value. Apart from housing

interactive game stations, SRPL also offers an extensive collection of game-related titles to enhance the learning and discovery process for novice and seasoned gamers alike. SRPL has also partnered with gaming entities such as the Singapore Cybersports and Online Gaming Association and DigiPen Institute of Technology, to organise programmes and workshops related to gaming.

Located at retail mall nex and the heart of a major transportation node, the library offers a wide selection of quick and easy reads such as comics, graphic novels and magazines which will be prominently displayed to make it easy for users to pick up a book on the go.

To celebrate the opening of SRPL, an exhibition titled “Serangoon: A place like no other” will be on display at the library. This exhibition showcases the heritage of the Serangoon area, as well as winning entries of the recently held “People, Places & Recollections” photo contest, where the community was invited to share photographs on the Serangoon area. SRPL has also partnered the National Heritage Board (NHB) to feature two exhibitions on “Food” and “Spice” targeted at children and young people, to create awareness and educate on the heritage of Singapore’s street food and spice trade.

The library has also teamed up with community and grassroots organisations to organise thematic programmes that engage both the young and old through interactive learning. Library users can look forward to programmes on heritage and green living as well as perennial favourites such as storytelling sessions for children.

Two new services with the opening of the Clementi Public Library (CMPL) were introduced. In line with the “Quick Stop” pick and go concept, the Mystery Brown Bag Service which targets the lunchtime crowd, offers convenient access to pre-selected reading materials packed according to popular themes. Apart from the Mystery Brown Bag Service, children can also enjoy experiential learning via the Interactive Digital Storytelling Kiosks, also a first to be introduced.

The Clementi Public Library is the 24th public library in Singapore. With a floor area of 1,900 square metres, the CMPL has a start-up collection of approximately 150,000 items, including books, magazines and audio-visual materials in the four official languages. The collection includes some 83,000 volumes of fiction and non-fiction books for adults and young people, as well as 67,000 books for children. The library also offers more than 400 local and international magazines, and a selection of local newspapers in the four official languages.

#### • **Books Come Alive**

Books Come Alive (BCA) is a nationwide reading programme for children aged 7 to 12 years. It aims to promote reading, encourage interaction and peer to peer sharing on reading interests, expand the reading experience and provide learning opportunities for children.

BCA started on 4 June 11 with a variety of mystery-themed children's programmes to be held till November 11. To promote its launch, a road show was held from 27-29 May at United Square Shopping Mall. The event saw 412 children participating in book review submissions and mystery-related activities, and 56 new library member signups.

Since its launch, 56 programmes including BCA signature programmes and children's specials have been conducted (as of 30 June 11), with more than 1,364 participants.

The Code RE(a)D Challenge is another BCA signature programme which entices children to read through clue solving games and reading/ drawing activities. The Challenge entails deciphering of 14 clues and piecing together answers to reveal a mystery book title. To get started, children redeem a sleuth's handbook (with 6 loans) and collect weekly clues at the public libraries. The Challenge ends in September, when the last clue is released. Kids with the correct answers will stand a chance to win

a mystery prize. In the first 2 weeks of the Challenge (4-19 June 11), 2,362 handbooks had been redeemed, contributing to 15,277 loans.

In the first month of its launch, more than 1,776 children have participated in the various BCA programmes.

#### • **kidsREAD**

This nation-wide reading programme was officially launched on 23 April 2004 by the then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. It is a collaborative effort by NLB, People's Association (PA) and 5 community self-help groups to promote the love of reading and cultivate good reading habits among children aged 4 – 8 years old from low-income families in Singapore.

Through this collaborative reading programme, 120 kidsREAD clubs have been set up throughout Singapore so far, involving more than 5000 volunteers and over 13,500 children have been reached. While the initial plan was to set up reading clubs at community clubs, public libraries and service centres affiliated with the community self-help groups, other agencies have come on board during the implementation phase. These include Primary Schools, Family Service Centres, Student Care Centres, Kindergartens, special needs organizations and children's homes.

With the future Library 2020 Strategic Plan, upon approval of funding from 2012 to 2016, kidsREAD will retain children on its programme until they complete Primary 2 instead of graduating them after one year on the programme. We will enhance the quality of the programme, the curriculum will be fine-tuned to cater to advancing the development of reading skills for the child as he or she ages. In addition the programme will be expanded to reach out to more children.

#### • **Launch of 10,000 and More Fathers Reading! 5th Anniversary Celebration**

The Launch of "10,000 & More Fathers Reading!" 5th year anniversary

celebration, themed “Reading – Your Very First Gift To Your Child”, attracted approximately 2,000 participants on Saturday, 4 June 2011 at The Plaza of National Library Building.

Father figures and their family members from all walks of life spent a Saturday afternoon and immersed in a slew of enriching programmes like storytelling, performances, games, workshops, reading tips, recommendation on children’s books and cool crafts.

Since its inception in June 2007, more than 60,000 participants have benefited from this programme which aims to encourage father figures to read to or with their young charges on a regular basis.

#### • **READ! Singapore**

Working with more than 120 partners, book agencies, community and business organizations as well as 100 schools over the past 6 years, the campaign has organised more than 1,600 book discussions and other reading-related activities and attracted over 160,000 participants from all over Singapore. We have reached out to a wide and diverse target audience, such as the National servicemen, taxi drivers, hairstylists, healthcare/ hospitality/ service Industry workers and civil servants.

Under READ! Singapore 2011, Book lovers can now read on the go with the launch of MobileRead, a free application developed by the National Library Board (NLB) to encourage people to read for this year’s READ! Singapore campaign. Launched by Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts at the opening ceremony of READ! Singapore 2011, MobileRead gives iPhone users free access to short stories which have been selected for READ! Singapore this year as well as those from the past six years of the annual campaign.

To further encourage people to read while on the move, NLB partnered the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) to promote MobileRead as part

of today's modern lifestyle. Since the soft launch of this application in January 2011, there have been 40,000 downloads including 29,000 e-books.

On 1 July, NLB and IDA hosted the "Enjoying A Digital Reading Lifestyle" carnival which also featured a READ! Singapore book display and other reading-related activities.

With twenty Singaporean authors behind the selected literary works for READ! Singapore 2011, this year's campaign showcased the highest number of Singapore authors since the campaign started in 2005, across the four official languages. All the four selected poems, and half of the sixteen selected novels and short stories, were written by Singaporeans. One of the books, *Gone Case* by Dave Chua is also the first Singaporean work to be published in a graphic novel version. Of the selected works by overseas authors, three have been made into award-winning films and movies.

The selected short stories and poems were also compiled and published into a special READ! Singapore 2011 anthology, which can be borrowed from NLB's libraries. READ! Singapore 2011 runs from 23 June to 28 September 2011. During this 14-week period there is a wide range of reading-related programmes and activities held at various locations across Singapore.

Reading Carnivals were organised by NLB and the grassroots leaders to reach out to more than 2,000 residents to encourage reading and forming of reading interest group among their residents in 2011.

With a bigger and broader scope of programmes to meet the needs and expectations of more readers both old and new, READ! Singapore has come a long way since its origin sixth years ago. The growing support of the public, commercial and educational institutions as well as the media is a testament to the status of READ! Singapore as an annual nationwide event to look out for.

Under the READ! Singapore annual campaign as well as its reading clubs, especially the Taxi Sifu Reading Club, we have encouraged many Singaporeans to cultivate the love for reading and become lifelong learners in the 21st century and beyond!

Moving forward, we hope to extend the reach of our campaign to children, as well as include the “writing” component and encourage people to pen their reflections after reading. To select more short stories for reading as well as to translate them into the other 3 languages.

#### • **Collaboration with the People’s Association**

The partnership with People’s Association (PA) enables NLB to leverage on the grassroots’ network of PA to reach out to more people in Singapore.

As the owner of the Passion Card Programme, PA engaged its members through a host of exciting and wholesome activities at the Community Centres and other PA outlets. There is a great synergy that both NLB and PA can achieve through collaboration.

The collaboration includes:

##### **a) NLB- PA Passion Card Partnership**

Under this partnership, PA Passion ez-link Card Members who are Singaporeans and Singapore Permanent Residents (PRs) can enjoy a free exclusive 5-year NLB Premium Membership upon registration. The NLB Premium Membership allows members to borrow up to eight (8) library items, including a maximum of four audio-visual materials from the public libraries.

Singaporeans and Singapore PRs who sign up for or renew their PA Passion Card membership from 1 Aug 2011 onwards will be automatically registered for the NLB Premium Membership, as per Terms and Conditions upon the registration for PA Passion Ez-Link Card programme. Existing PA Passion ez-link Card Members

prior to this period will need to approach any of the NLB libraries to register for their complimentary NLB Premium Membership until the expiry of their PAssion Card Membership.

#### **b) PAssion Reading Club**

PA and NLB shall jointly develop programmes to engage the PAssion Card Members in activities that promote reading and reading-related activities. One such programme is the development and expansion of the Reading Club Interest Groups between NLB and PA, which will involve more members in the Reading Club Interest Groups and at the same time, offer the members the platform to engage in community service aimed at encouraging reading.

#### **c) Dinner and Durian Party for Reading Club Members**

A “Dinner & Durian Party” gathering was organised by PA on 15 July for more than 200 people to showcase reading clubs and encourage new grassroots leaders to form reading clubs. With this, NLB organised 8 enriching book discussion sessions (4 in English and 4 in Chinese) to encourage the setting up of reading clubs among new grassroots leaders at the gathering. The long term plan for PA is to set up reading clubs at all the constituencies in Singapore.

#### **• Outreach to Users and Communities**

As part of our community engagement efforts, Public Libraries conduct various outreach events to schools, community clubs, organisations, external large-scale events.

For YP services, a total of 59 outreach events were conducted, reaching a total of 19,498 participants. For seniors’ services, a total of 4 outreach events were conducted, reaching a total of 2,033 participants. For general audiences, a total of 17 outreach events were conducted, reaching a total of 17,731 participants.

Highlights of the external large-scale events are:

- Active Ageing Carnival (1 - 3 Apr): Apart from showcasing our collection and services, librarians also conducted book sharing and erhu sharing session on stage during the carnival. About 1,770 library books and AV items were available for the public to borrow. A total of 1,497 books were borrowed.

- Canberra Day (17 Apr): a grassroots event organised by Jelutung Community Centre/ Canberra Consultative Citizens' Committee. 3,000 participants turned up for the event, majority of the participants visited NLB booth to browse and collect an activity stamp, so as to redeem a goodie bag. 724 loans were made during this event.

- National Institute of Education (10 May & 6 Jun): A series of outreach activities to NIE was coordinated to promote library services and products to graduating teachers. The response was encouraging, and we received some positive feedback for our efforts.

#### • Learning Communities

There are currently 23 Learning Communities (LCs) managed by the Adult and Young People's team at the public libraries. The LCs include groups centred on reading, and those that are "activity-focused", i.e. where members have a shared interest and reading/ learning resources are introduced along with the discussions. For teens and adults/ seniors, a total of 29 sessions were held, reaching a total of 642 participants.

The latest addition to our LCs was the Singapore Novelist Club at CTPL. Its first session in May saw 12 participants, mainly individuals who are keen to know more about creative/fiction writing. Seniors' Reading Club (Chinese), Taxi Sifu Club, Book Lovers Club and Gaming LC continue to draw good turnouts.

Under the READ! Singapore banner, we are able to attract the participation of 100 schools and rally in the support of more than 120 partners from Government / Ministries, Community/Grassroots organisations as well as partners from the Service and Hospitality Industry to organise book discussion sessions and set up reading clubs. READ! Singapore had also successfully influenced taxi drivers, hairstylists, teachers, healthcare /hospitality/service officers, civil servants, youth and senior citizens to set up their own reading clubs. To date, more than 90 Reading Clubs have been formed.

All of these LCs continue to engage Singaporeans in reading and discussion and play an active in keeping reading and learning alive.

### **The Future – Libraries for Life: NLB’s Strategic Plan into 2020**

Moving forward, NLB’s Strategic Plan will focus on programmes aimed at strengthening NLB’s core business of promoting reading and ensuring that the positive social capital generated by libraries is enhanced.

This will see the shift from Just Libraries to making libraries preferred social spaces for community interaction for all Singaporeans. Our reading programmes will move from a ‘one size fits all’ approach to a National Reading and Info-literacy framework tailored to specific needs in collaboration with community partners. From our current work in the collection and preservation of Singapore content, we will work next on the curation of the Singapore story with active community engagement. We already have content available in many different forms on our shelves and we will use this to further reach the underserved and build special collections which will allow Singaporeans to level up their reading and learning. Currently, our digital library service acts as an auxiliary to our main services and network of public libraries. In the next lap of development, we want to bring digital resources and services anytime, anywhere.

In our Library 2000 plans, it was infrastructure-driven and we laid the foundation for our network of public libraries. With the Library 2010 plan, we envisioned the development of the digital infrastructure, keeping up with current

trends and technologies. With our new Library 2020 strategic plan, we have set a new vision of **‘Readers for Life, Learning Communities, Knowledgeable Nation.’**

### **New vision ‘Readers for Life, Learning Communities, Knowledgeable Nation**

Let us explain here why these have been chosen as part of our strategic plan. Reading is essential to the foundation of knowledge acquisition and learning and libraries are in a position to foster reading for life on a national level. Learning communities can be built through interactions at libraries, where individuals can connect to their communities and at the same time, fostering a sense of belonging and shared values in our multicultural society. In the next decade, Singapore aspires to be a Knowledgeable Nation and libraries play a key role in fostering lifelong learning among individuals and communities. Partnerships among libraries and other institutions can lead to greater access to our nation’s collective knowledge resources and content.

To realise this vision, we are focusing on four key strategic objectives as follows:

- **Reading, Learning and Info-Literacy**

This objective will focus on entrenching the reading habit and will grow reading interests among existing and avid readers. We want to lay strong foundations for reading among pre-schoolers and young families; sustain youth interest in reading and learning through school engagement; facilitate active learning and community engagement with seniors; continual educating and updating Singaporeans on information literacy to strengthen information literacy among Singaporeans and ensure that they develop a habit of enquiry which they can use in all aspects of their lives.

- **Next Generation Libraries**

Building on the popularity and well-loved role of libraries as community spaces, the role of libraries will be further strengthened in the years to come. The next generation libraries will continue to provide equal access to knowledge for everyone and will promote knowledge sharing. Under this umbrella, all 24 public libraries will further fortify their role in serving as social touchpoints for learning, culture and community engagement.

- **Excellence in Singapore and Regional Content**

In this, we want to ensure an authoritative collection of Singapore content and engage Singaporeans in discovering and using NLB's Singapore content. Through all of this, we hope to foster a sense of national identity and pride through appreciating Singapore's content.

- **Digital Library, Anytime, Anywhere**

Access to digital library resources and services will be improved and users will be provided with easy and intuitive access and interfaces. This objective also means that NLB will be quick to adapt to new and emerging technologies in its delivery of digital services to Singaporeans.

## **Conclusion**

NLB's future Library 2020 Strategic Plan will ensure that Singaporeans have continued access to knowledge and will champion reading and information literacy for the effective use of knowledge. NLB will provide Singaporeans with a safe and reliable haven for learning, whether in the physical or digital realm.

# **Korean National Strategy for Library Development and Reading Promotion for Children and Young Adults**

**Sook Hyeun Lee**

**Director General of the National Library for Children and Young Adults**

## **Introduction**

Korea became independent from Japan after World War II in 1945. However, due to the Korean War in 1950, its per capita GNP stood at mere 60 dollars, making Korea one of the poorest countries in the world. Today, it has become the 13th largest economic powerhouse and transformed itself from a country which received international aid to a donor country which helps other countries. The reason Korea with a 50 million population and scarce natural resources achieved democratization and industrialization together with economic success lies in Korean people's strong drive for education.

The importance of childhood reading has been more recognized among Korean parents and they have paid a lot of attention to children's reading since 2000. Such awareness of reading prompted people to build new libraries, which also led to 'Miracle Libraries' building program run by MBC one of the major broadcasting companies in Korea in 2003. Also, the program played a key role in building a lot of small libraries nationwide, which had been mostly funded by the private sector.

Such movements and atmosphere contributed to generating interests from state and local governments in Korea. The Ministry of Culture released a 'Comprehensive Development Plan for the Library' in 2003. In addition, the Ministry of Education put forward a 'Comprehensive Revitalization Plan for School Library'. Also, local governments put in efforts for improved services for children, such as building new libraries or expanding existing children's rooms in public libraries.

Roles that the library plays in promoting reading cannot be overstated. The current Korean library Act which has been revised 11 times since 1963 essentially focused on establishing the public libraries and Information Policy Committee under the supervision of the President. The act will mandate the Comprehensive Development Plan for the Library, defining roles of libraries in closing the digital divide and assisting the implementation of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the Library. Meanwhile, the Reading Culture Promotion Act was enacted in 2006 too, which included mandating the establishment of the reading culture promotion basic plan, requiring local governments to provide the equal reading education and defining roles that communities, schools and companies play in promoting reading.

The School Library Promotion Act describes rules and regulations of the establishment, operation and assistance of school libraries. It also essentially includes legal and institutional support such as funding for the school library, establishment of the library's promotional basic plan, placement of school library personnel and building a library network. With that end, the act contributed to further improving the school libraries environment.

The Comprehensive Plan for the Library Development was released by the government in 2003 inspired by the national reading movement which was launched in the end of 1990s. The main objectives are to raise public access to the library, expand collections, provide customized library services for users and promote reading. In 2006 the Library Act was amended in order to implement the plan in an effective way. Also the Second Comprehensive Development Plan for the Library was devised in 2009. The First and Second Comprehensive Development Plan for Library has served as a major driving force to improve the public library environment.

The Ministry of Education makes efforts to vitalize school libraries including expanding school libraries and collections, and placing library personnel, which were described in the 2003 Comprehensive Revitalization Plan for School Libraries. As a result, each school library has improved its environment and more schools have new school libraries meeting the demands of students and support self-initiated learning focusing on reading by upgrading the 7th national educational curriculum.

Under the Reading Promotion Act, the reading promotion policies have been devised.

The main ideas include:

- To create a desirable reading environment at homes, kindergartens, schools and communities
- To encourage reading habits, developing and distributing lifetime reading programs
- To conduct reading movements by utilizing various media channels
- To run reading programs especially for the disabled, senior citizens, prison inmates and multicultural families.

### **Improvement of Library Infrastructure**

The revision of the Library Act, Comprehensive Development Plan for the Library in 2003 and 2009 and the Comprehensive Revitalization Plan for School Libraries were contributed to the most remarkable improvements of the Korean library system in the Korean history.

The number of public libraries has increased 748 in 2010 from 436 in 2001. The number of collections which public libraries hold has doubled and the number of school library collections has increased nearly two and a half times over the last 8 years. Also the number of school librarians has quadrupled in the same period.

**The number of libraries**

year	Public libraries	year	School libraries	year	Small libraries
2544	436	2545	8,101	2548	130
2553	748	2553	10,937	2551	3,324

**The number of collections at public and school libraries**

Public libraries		year 2002	year 2006	year 2009
	Number of collections	30.97 million	49.34 million	62.56 million
Number of books per person	0.64	1.01	1.26	
School Libraries	Number of collections	48.73 million	72,02 million	114.89 million
	Number of books per student	5.5	9.5	15.4

**The number of librarians at public and school libraries**

Public libraries		year 2002	year 2006	year 2009
	Number of librarians	1,918	2,560	3,052
Number of library users whom a librarian serves	25,051	19,173	16,308	
School Libraries	Number of school librarians	164	424	682
	Percentage of schools with librarians	2%	4.2%	6.2%

## **Library reading promotion efforts and results**

### **National Library of Korea (National Library for Children and Young Adults)**

Efforts made by central and local governments led to library development focusing on quantity aspects such as building more libraries and improving the overall library environment. Soon, we began to realize that libraries should be equipped with professional librarians, quality collection development policies and excellent reading programs to satisfy library users' high demand so the National Library of Korea (NLK) has made effort to enhance quality aspects.

In an attempt, the NLK established the National Library for Children and Young Adults (NLCY) in 2006. As a representative children's library in Korea, the NLCY shows leadership to children's libraries nationwide so that they provide better children's services and reading promotion programs. One of the NLCY's main goals is to develop creative reading promotion programs for children and young adults and distribute the programs to public and school libraries. Also the NLCY provides continuing education programs for children's librarians. The followings are the education program and major reading programs run by the NLCY.

#### **- Continuing Education Program for Children's Librarians**

According to the statistics from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Korea, children and young adults accounted for over 50 percent of all public library users. Also the statistics showed that more than 92 million books were loaned in 2008 nationwide and 51 percent of them were children's books. The figure indicates that children's services are one of the most important parts of library services. As a few library and information science departments in Korea only offer two or three courses related to children's services, graduates who do not have in-depth knowledge and understanding of children's services enter the workforce as children's librarians at public libraries. Under such circumstances, continuing education programs are

urgently needed for children's librarians to acquire professionalism. So, the NLCY identified what children's librarians wanted to learn most and made strategic plans for continuing education programs. In addition, the NLCY conducted task analysis to create better continuing education programs for children's librarians and finally we developed 9 courses including 'Understanding Children's Books', 'Programming for Children', 'Communicating with Children', 'Understanding Children's Literature', and 'In-depth Reading of Picture Books'. The courses are designed around key areas like children's books, reading promotion programs and communication skills with children. We first ran group training courses and then developed cyber courses. Today, the NLCY focuses more on the online courses as they have proved to be more effective to librarians who find it difficult to participate in group training due to geographical and time constraints. In order to strengthen practice-based aspects of the training, we also run short-term practical workshops. According to program satisfaction survey, 87.2% of respondents said the training contributed to developing their professionalism and 75.4% of respondents said that they would apply what they learned to their library works, which demonstrate effectiveness of the program.

#### - Reading Books with the Library

The program is designed to promote reading among underprivileged children in partnership with 90 public libraries across the nation. Librarians or instructors visit local children's welfare centers or childcare centers once a week where they run reading programs and post-reading activities for children in need. The NLCY annually provides each participating library with \$3,500 worth of funding. Much of the budget is spent on purchasing books and hiring instructors. The program is to help underprivileged children to develop reading habits and foster their dreams at libraries. Also it is to break the vicious circle of poverty by giving them more reading education opportunities and improving their literacy and reading skills. As participating children

are from low income families, they lag behind in class and struggle in their language development. Also, they tend to show some characteristic problems being more reserved or violent. In the first stage of the program, children did not show much interest in librarians or reading itself. However, as time went by, they changed gradually. They started to build confidence in reading and even enjoy school life. As they became more optimistic, their social skills improved.

### **Testimonials from participating children**

“When I first heard the reading therapy, I thought it was stupid because I was not sick. When I asked “why do I need to take reading therapy?” the librarian told me, “It is good for broadening your horizon. It stimulates your mind”. We read together and did some fun activities. I did not like the class activities when we first started. The reading instructor was very patient with me so my interest in reading has slowly grown. What interests me most during the program is to experience how the disabled live their lives. I have sympathy for them and realize challenges and difficulties they are faced with. Now I find myself very interested in reading and feel like I have more self-esteem. Before I was afraid to read aloud in class but now I enjoy reading aloud and school”.

“Before I took part in the reading program, I did not like reading nor did I visit a library. Now I am a totally different person, I love reading and I become more social and confident.”

“At first I was very nervous when I took the reading class. Soon my reading skills improved a lot and I found many interesting books. Also, I could continue reading even at school and home.”

“I was not fond of reading. I thought it was boring. But the program made me enjoy reading. I especially like writing book reviews with my reading teacher. She kindly explained words I didn’t know. Now my vocabulary is getting bigger.”

The program leads to many positive changes in underprivileged children as well as serves as an opportunity for librarians to think of their jobs from a different perspective. They thought of users who visit the library as their clients but they now see people who have difficulties accessing the library as another major client group. As librarians witnessed how the reading class transformed children, they realized the importance of reading again and how rewarding their job is. Even though libraries cannot secure funding from the NLCY, they are willing to set aside a budget to continue the program.

- Library Adventure by Bookworms aged 13 to 18

Middle and high school students who used to enjoy reading while they were younger find it hard to spend time on reading as they encounter plenty of subjects to study and heavy homework. The program which is designed to promote reading among middle and high school students is developed by the NLCY and distributed to school libraries across the country. Teenage bookworm readers play a leading role in creating the recommended book list and the NLCY produces the reading book list poster called 'Map of the Library Adventure by Bookworms aged 13 to 18, using cartoons personally drawn by young adults. The involvement of young people arouses their peer's interest in books and looks more appealing because teenagers are more influenced by their peer groups than parents, teachers or librarians. The program is largely created and run by the student participation.

Bookworm Readers consisting of 800 students who are avid readers are selected to recommend books for their friends according to nine themes that young adults are interested in such as 'My future', 'Sex and love', 'Friends' 'My Planet: Earth' 'Meaning of Family', 'Secrets of Life' and 'Everything We Do Is Art'. The online community is run to enhance interaction among participants where they post book reviews or share different post reading programs. Annually 40 middle and high schools are

selected to run the program and each school is given \$2,000 of financial support by the NLCY. Half of the budget is spent on purchasing books and the rest is spent on running diverse reading programs. The program has contributed to the creation of voluntary reading environment in the daily lives of young people and promoting school libraries. A growing number of school librarians and teachers provide customized reading counseling to students by taking advantage of the recommended book list. Also, the program allows participating libraries to enhance their image so that more and more students visit the libraries.

- Development and Distribution of Reading Content for Multicultural Families Korea has transformed itself from a homogeneous society to a multicultural society as a huge number of foreign migrant workers find jobs in Korea and international marriage becomes the norm. Often we see that children born to foreign mother struggle in their speech and language development and they lag behind in class and tend to be more reserved or violent. Against this backdrop, it is necessary for the library to provide services tailored for multicultural children so that they can improve their literacy and reading skills. In partnership with the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, the NLCY created storytelling content books and DVDs and distributed them to public libraries and cultural centers across the nation so that they can better serve multicultural users. Korean picture books for storytelling were translated into English and then re-translated into four major ethnic languages in Korea including Vietnamese, Thai, Mongolian and Chinese. Finally they were turned into the storytelling animation DVDs to make children more involved. So far, we developed 150 kinds of storytelling content and plan to develop 130 more this year. The content is freely available at the Library website.

#### - Reading Bankbook Program

The reading bankbook program aims at encouraging children's reading habits. This program uses the RFID chip and its reader. The RFID tag is attached to every item held in the NLCY's collections. This technology is instrumental in introducing this program. The reading bankbook enables children to keep track of the data regarding what, when and how many books they have read. After we introduced this program, fruitful results have been achieved. Children tend to regard the 'library bankbook' as their important asset. They tend to stay longer at the library and read more in order to set more reading records. It gives children more confidence and pride as they build more reading records on their bankbook. I often found some children chose easy-to-read books or quite thin books to set records quickly but later they decided to read more age appropriate books, ultimately arousing their reading interest.

#### - National Public Library Reading Class

The NLCY developed the 'Reading Class Operation Manual' and distributed the manual to public libraries across the nation so that they can run the program in an effective way. The Library holds the Reading Class Workshop targeting children's librarians twice a year free of charge, which contributes to developing professionalism of librarians. Since 2010, the promotional posters of the summer and winter reading class have been created and distributed to public libraries. The Chief Executive of the National Library of Korea and the NLCY Awards have been granted to students who complete the summer and winter reading class with excellence results. Also, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism Awards are given to 30 excellent leaders such as librarians, teachers and related specialists who display strong leadership. The number of public libraries which take part in the Reading Class has increased every year.

## **Results**

The 2010 National Reading Statistics indicates that reading promotions and library development efforts made by the government and private sector since 2000 finally paid off. According to the statistics, children and young adults' reading rate recorded the highest level after the statistics was first conducted in 1993. Also, the number of books which each child read per semester rose from 11.6 in 2002 to 16.5 in 2010.

Similarly, the use of public libraries by children increased from 54.3% in 2002 to 71.5% in 2010. Major factors behind the increase are an improved environment of children's library including renovated children's section in public libraries and building more children's libraries and small libraries. '10 Minutes Morning Reading' program is another contributing factor. With more than half of all middle and high schools implementing the morning reading program, students who take part in the program read 20.3 books each semester while those who do not take part read only 11.8 books. It clearly confirms that the morning reading program has been effective in developing children's reading habits and motivating them to read more. In particular, library visits by elementary and secondary students recorded the highest level since 2002 because the number of libraries as well as the number of collections has gradually increased and children's librarians have provided better services for young patrons. In addition, NLCY and public libraries provide many reading programs and schools promote the importance of reading.

## **Conclusion**

In a knowledge based society where not only individual but also national competitiveness is sharpened by information and knowledge, libraries take heavy responsibility for raising national competitiveness. Libraries should provide desirable reading environment for users who visit libraries and those who have difficulties accessing libraries so everyone will have equal access and foster their dreams and

envision their futures at libraries. When a book titled ‘Miraculous Learning at Library’ was published in 2005, it came as a surprise to Korean society where families spend a huge amount of money on private education. The author was talking about her experience how successfully she educated her children without any help of private education but by taking advantage of libraries. She went to Paris to study Art History with her 6 year old daughter who could not speak one word of French. Her daughter was able to fully understand French 18 months later by attending a Storytelling program everyday run by a public library in Paris. After she came back to Korea, she brought her second daughter who had struggled speaking Korean to a public library and read books to her daughter. Later without much difficulties, her daughter learned Korean. After experiencing successful language studies at library, now she asks her daughters to read subject related children’s books. For example, she encourages her kids to read math story books rather than giving them math workbooks, which is a good idea to make math concepts come alive. The author claims that reading itself can be the best teacher and learn every school subject by reading subject-related story books. Also, she praised the library as one of the best education institutions equipped with resources and tools. If we create more children friendly libraries and programs, it will ultimately enhance future national competitiveness as our future relies on our children. It is one of ways to maximize the benefits of our investment by fostering creative talent. Korean student’s high academic performance including ranking second in the Program for International Student Assessment among OECD countries in 2010 has not been achieved overnight. The continued interest and investment enables us to achieve such success.

## Reading Habits of Thai People in a Cultural Dimension

Nidhi Eoseewong

### Reading before Printing Press were Available

Although the Thai writing scripts existed long ago traditional Thai society was not a literary society and most communications, be they for government administration or daily contact and communication amongst people, did not take place using the letters of the alphabet.

The need for written communication was so minimal that although Siam's contact with China dated back for centuries, Thais have never felt the need to import printing technology from China.

The limited production of literature as well as some religious manuscripts, the latter being more numerous, including various "texts" such as massage handbooks, handbooks on watching doves, etc., including legal compendia, legends, royal chronicles and various historical notes mostly perished with few examples having survived. The central administrative power received only occasional reports from the regional seats of power with some not bothering to submit a written report at all if nothing extraordinary occurred.

On the other hand, the central government also rarely sent written orders to the periphery. This was due to the limited power of the central government and so the need to communicate with the regional centres of power was not that great when compared to other ancient societies which used written language such as China or Japan which have an incomparably greater number of written documents. Thai Buddhist temples were not tasked with recording the births, marriages and deaths of

local people and even records of the abbots of the temple do not exist.

It should be noted that trading, which gave birth to a written script, played almost not role in producing written texts in pre-modern Thai society before the introduction of the printing press beyond some written contracts of trading transactions and slave contracts. If one looks at the borrowing and loan transactions (of money, boats, draught animals, rice farms, etc.), one will notice that none were conducted through written contracts. Writings on the debate over religious texts are also almost non-existent with most religious texts being written in order to be used to preach to others.

As for so-called literature, very little was penned and most scripts were consumed not through the direct act of reading but through listening, reciting, prayers or stage acting. One royal tradition is the lullaby, the reading of texts before royals go to sleep. The royal page would read books in a rhythmic manner (itself a kind of poetic recital) thus these texts were created not to be read but to be listened to.

This is the reason why prose writing is very limited in Thai literature prior to the introduction of the printing press (the nature of prose is not suited for listening or ‘reciting’).

What is more, the number of written manuscripts prior to printing are few and far between (when compared to many other societies) and the need to produce a written text was limited while possession of a written text was costly (including the cost of having a book hand copied). So most people did not get the opportunity to read. The records of a missionary clinic noted that in the early Bangkok period a survey revealed that 45 per cent of their patients (who are mostly lower class people and Chinese) were literate, but they would still mostly have little or no opportunity to read in real life. Whether their writing and reading proficiency is adequate for a daily use or not is also doubtful.

How does such society pass on knowledge, ideas and beauty?

The answer lies in memorization along with the religious teaching (of all religious faiths) that there exists one set of truths, thus learning is about memorizing the right information which is absolutely correct and requires no critical thinking and no argument from other vantage points beyond that which exists in the text or istaught by the teacher.

### **The Reading Process in Contemporary World**

The reading process that Thais are familiar with today is not what we were used to. But what is this reading process like?

Reading is directly accessing meanings through signs, such as reading traffic signs, reading facial expressions and body language. Although the signs used in language are composed of written scripts and it appears that we first transform the scripts into sounds and then decipher the meaning from the sounds, in reality those proficient at reading understand what the text conveys without first transforming it into sounds. We look at the written words in the way the Chinese or Japanese see their characters because we are familiar with the combined letters to the point where the meaning simply flows into the brain and the inner consciousness. (This is why, although the old way of spelling words in Thai differs somewhat from the present, we still manage to read, although it takes more time for us to translate words into a more familiar set of signs).

We look at words as signs, especially often displayed words which we repeatedly see in a certain type of writing that requires only a glance in order to make out the meaning. This explains why we can read daily newspapers quickly and why we only scan for meanings which interest us.

Even in books where the content is mostly known in advance, people tend only to casually glance through it.

One more interesting aspect of the reading process is the question whether the “meaning” that we receive through reading differs in accordance with the type of manuscript or not. It seems that direct reading of written signs enables our brain and heart to acquire more detailed consideration of the meaning of the text compared to oral reading. (Some people can instantaneously react to the no parking sign and plan what to do next while others also take a split second to consider whether they will be arrested for breaking the traffic laws.)

Thus, when reading creative works, people automatically open up their hearts to meanings that touch their feelings no less than ones that affect their rational thinking. The demands of the contemporary world dictate that readers today seek a linear line of reason in order to find out what authors seek to convey and why they conclude things the way they do. In other words, contemporary reading is always filled with analysis (both through rational thought and feelings).

This is markedly different from writings which are consumed through listening. Please note Sunthornphu’s following poem.

“People whose love resided in both places,  
 enjoy love from both mother and father  
 One relies on oneself, one speaks after one thinks”

“มนุษย์นี้ที่รักอยู่สองสถาน บิดามารดาร์กมักเป็นผล  
 ที่พึ่งหนึ่งพึ่งได้แต่กายตน เกิดเป็นคนคิดเห็นจึงเจรจา”

The rationale of the above poem seems very fuzzy if it is to be judged through the current reading process. What Sunthornphu tries to convey is that only the loves of one’s mother and father as well as self-love can be trusted. The last line does not appear to be related to a trusted love but is an attempt to relate self-love with actions beneficial to oneself. But Sunthornphu did not elaborate why thinking before speaking is the most beneficial thing one can do to oneself.

Most writings today were penned in order to have people “read” in accordance with the determined meaning and one must read accordingly in order to derive joy and knowledge from contemporary writing.

Thus the problem is how Thais who were not used to reading this way adapt after the introduction of the printing press.

### **Dissemination of the Reading Process through Schools**

Printing came into being in Siam only four decades prior to the inception of modern education. After printing presses were introduced, not that many new writing was produced specifically for the printing press. Many of the books published were those written prior to the introduction of the printing press and even those written after were written in the same fashion as those penned prior to the introduction of the printing press (such as Wat Na Kor’s poetic tales).

For this reason, Thais’ reading habit did not immediately change even after the introduction of Western-style education and schools. Texts were written and published for purchase by students although these texts were written under the old paradigm of education which stresses the importance of rote memorization, the only difference being that texts that were translated from Pali are now replaced by those translated from English. Thai school texts today thus mostly lack the aspect of academic “debate” and mostly contain easily understood summaries without the need to know the source of the content that is required to be memorized. It is almost no different from religious scripture.

The continuous expansion of schools until the present is thus the propagation of a reading culture which existed prior to the printing press in Thai society. Students are taught to read carefully, and to pay attention to every word, rather than to comprehend the text and its underlying thinking process which led to the production of the text. We read literature in class by relying on our imagination more than

our knowledge of vocabulary and rhythm. Reading thus ends up being hard work and a serious undertaking and so what area of our brain will be left to do the critical thinking, in-depth understanding, debate or agreement with the text which one reads?

(These days, campaigns to promote Thais to read more still stress the benefits from the knowledge gained from reading while no mention is made regarding the joy of reading)

The failure in the teaching of precise reading is an indicator of the feebleness of reading in Thai education. This subject was modelled on the précis of English schools and used to be found in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools although the teaching of précis in Thai schools has turned into readings that the teacher uses as short practice models without training students to learn how to grasp the thrust of the texts and to concisely extract the main issue expressed (together with the rationale the writer used in his or her work).

In many schools, the reading texts used for practice are only a paragraph or two, and do not include the main point of the writer's complete piece. At many of these schools, teachers would underline certain passages in the reading assignment and string them together for students to read.

In reality, the teaching of précis constitutes an important foundation of education and can aid students to learn how to read and write all the way to advanced levels. The Thai system teaches students to summarise in the service of brevity without regard to what should be shortened. In the end, Thai educators saw no merit in the subject and discontinued it in schools.

To summarise, while Thai schools teach students to read, they teach it in a manner which existed prior to the introduction of the printing press and many Thais continue to read in that manner. So although the literacy rate amongst Thais is almost 100 per cent there are not many readers when compared to the percentage of the population who can read and write. The explanation that books are too costly for most Thais can only provide part of the explanation for the dilemma Thai society

finds itself in, as we must also note the fact that statistics regarding the number of users of public libraries, and even university libraries, are low.

Part of the challenge in the promotion of reading in a society which only recently entered the printing age is to provide greater access to books, but most important is how we can launch qualitative educational reform.

Thai education must stop teaching one-dimensional truths or singular truths but must teach students to search for the truth by themselves from various dimensions of truth, from various contexts where the truth is situated. In order to achieve this, students must be cajoled to read, but reading must be enjoyable and fun. Students should be able to speed read, to scan texts, or engage in close reading, to read in order to enjoy, and to read in order to search, so that schools can be a forum for the exchange of views amongst readers and not an abode where the accepted truth is eternally declared.

As long as the attitude toward reading does not change to that of the reading process in the age of the printing press This will find it difficult to read books no matter how hard the promotions and campaigns may try.

# Factors Affecting the Promotion of a Reading Culture in Thailand<sup>1</sup>

Aurasri Ngamwittayaphong

## 1. Introduction: Thai people don't like reading

“Thai people don't like reading” is the social report that we have heard continuously via various media for decades. A survey of the people's book reading habits conducted in 2003 by the National Statistical Office, which was assigned by the government to gather basic information about this, found that out of the 57.8 million people over 6 years old, there were 35.4 million readers, or 61.2%, and 22.4 million non-readers or 38.8%. (Matichon, 2003). The National Statistical Office's 2008 report stated that outside study/work time, Thai people read approximately 39 minutes per day. (National Statistical Office, 2008). In 2009, the Thai government therefore declared reading as a national issue that must be seriously promoted. In fact, in the decade since the education reform of 1999 public and private agencies as well as business corporations have given importance and consistent support to reading promotion. However, reading seems to remain a minority interest and a social challenge that has not yet been solved and seems difficult to tackle.

This article will present information and opinions that the author obtained from research into what factors would be required to promote a love of reading among Thai people to the point that reading becomes part of their culture and lifestyle. The researcher's definition of “**reading culture**” is “the behaviour of continuous

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<sup>1</sup> Arranged and adapted from the research results of Aurasri Ngamwittayaphong, Kanittha Pavenayothin, and Kanokwan Sae-Jang “A study of factors enabling and inhibiting the creation of a reading culture: A case study of the Reading Culture Promotion Programme”, sponsored by: the Reading Culture Promotion Plan, The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth), research conducted by: The Internal Monitoring and Evaluation Project in the Reading Culture Promotion Plan – Institute for Wholistic Management, 2010

reading until it becomes a personal habit covering all areas of one's way of life (work, recreation, the search for knowledge and wisdom, communication, etc.), in which the reader sees the value and benefits of reading and hence also teaches or promotes reading to others". The word "**reading**" in this article means not only the literacy or the ability to read books, but also reading that leads to the development of the readers' ability to think in various ways such as imagining, analyzing, criticizing interpreting, etc. because such reading is the only way to build people, build the nation and build the future of Thai society.

## **2. Retracing the movement to promote reading among Thai people**

The research's literature review found that the Ministry of Education was the state agency with the main role as the important mechanism in reading promotion. This was because reading was a matter under their direct responsibility of providing education from the basic level to ensure all Thais' literacy and to enable them to use reading as a learning tool in higher levels. In the past decade, the Ministry of Education stated that they had succeeded in solving the literacy problem of Thai people nationwide but the essential remaining task was to encourage Thai people to read more.

The public sector's promotion of the reading habit among Thai people began seriously in 1999 as part of education reform. The Ministry of Education's reading promotion was in the form of annual programs/projects:

- 1) Programme to promote reading activities for children, youth and the general public
- 2) Programme to improve learning centres with projects to promote the development of library management services; support for core networks; living library development; and development of public libraries and learning resources.
- 3) Programme for public relations associates to promote reading

Apart from the Ministry of Education, the Thai government in 2005 also established

a new agency, the Thai Knowledge Park (TK park), under the Office of Knowledge Management and Development (Public Organization), the Prime Minister's Office, to promote reading, thinking and learning via the creation of living libraries as the prototype of modern learning centres. In another key movement to promote the love of reading among Thais 32 organizations from the public and private sectors, including the business sector and non-governmental organizations united under the name "Book Network for Children, Youth and Families" to move forward the "books for children" strategy. This comprised four aspects: a strategy for book distribution to children; a campaign to promote the desire to read and reading behaviour; promotion of quality books at appropriate prices; and protection of children against harmful media and eradication of obstacles to reading. This network's drive led to an important change in 2009, when the Ministry of Education set up a committee for the promotion of reading to create a learning society. The Ministry also successfully proposed to the Cabinet on 5 August 2009 to set reading promotion as a national agenda item and to make April 2 of every year "Reading Day". The Ministry also assigned a sub-committee to formulate the three key reading promotion strategies.

- 1) To develop Thai people's reading ability
- 2) To promote Thai people to have a reading habit
- 3) To create an atmosphere and environment conducive to reading

The government also declared 2009-2018 the Decade of Reading and assigned the Committee for the Promotion of Reading as the driving mechanism for reading promotion.

### **3. Who Does What and How to Create a Reading Culture**

With regard to the form or method of promoting reading among Thai people, it was found that, in the first phase, the Ministry of Education emphasized children in the school system, from the primary to higher secondary level. The mechanism to drive forward the reading promotion policy was therefore schools under the Department of General Education, which later came under the Basic Education Commission. In 2005,

the target group was expanded to educational institutions under the Departments of Vocational Education and Non-formal Education while public libraries were established and operated under the supervision of the Department of Non-Formal and Informal Education (NFE). The mechanisms to promote reading among more target groups expanded to vocational institutions and non-formal learning centres. Strategy activities were under the supervision of the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Education until the year 2009 when a structure to support reading promotion for the creation of a lifelong learning society was established and headed by the Committee for the Promotion of Reading.

Reading promotion guidelines in the first phase focused on creating activities directly promoting reading to engage the target group, students, to read more. Schools were used as the mechanism to create activities within school so that students would love reading and subjects taught in class were also used in the reading promotion process. For example, the arrangement of 15 minutes reading time for students throughout the school to read together, which could be on daily basis or on certain days as appropriate. Schools also created an environment conducive for regular reading such as setting up reading corners in classrooms, book recommendations, setting up exhibitions about books and reading, organizing reading or writing contests, awards to the best readers and reading schools, providing sufficient books for teachers, students and school personnel to choose etc. Many schools put these guidelines into ongoing practice but there were no figures to indicate exactly how many schools had implemented the project and what the results were.

Besides pushing for Thai people to love reading via schools, the government's role in reading promotion in the past decade also extended to obtaining the cooperation of the private sector, such as the collaboration with CP Seven Eleven Public Company Limited, Siam Cement Foundation etc. Many interesting activities therefore emerged, such as a project called "Bring Good Books to Thai Children" to publish good books at cheap prices so parents can access good books that children around the world had enjoyed reading; a project to promote authors of books for small children, and the "Book Start" project aimed to create a reading culture by instilling the love of reading from early childhood.

#### **4. Proactive Work, Expanding Target Areas**

The government's important mechanism in the proactive promotion of reading culture in the latter part of the past decade has been TK park, established in 2005 with the new idea and approach of making reading activities up-to-date, modern

and creative – unlike the former image. TK park integrated reading with thinking and the search for knowledge by ways such as enlivening libraries to motivate people to seek knowledge, think and learn creatively for life through reading and other new and different activities. Besides direct services, TK park also arranged activities to promote factors supporting reading such as organizing librarian training, hosting living library contests, creating materials and children's books, gathering and developing a body of knowledge, and adopting the role of supporter in knowledge management, concepts and practical guidelines from reading promotion from numerous research studies.

The TK park therefore was the agency that systematically and comprehensively promoted reading, especially when compared with other agencies. This possibly resulted from the fact that the organization was established with a clear mission and a non-bureaucratic management approach. It was thus more independent and flexible in operating creatively than under the bureaucratic system. A clear example was that while libraries in general had the image of being “repositories of books (which no one read)”, the TK park's living library, located in the Central World Shopping Mall, was a good quality library attracting large numbers of people. The number of new members in 2007 increased to 21,693 and the daily service use rate by walk-ins and TK park members was as high as 296,147 in the same year. It also produced research demonstrating the reading issues in Thai society.

In addition to the role of TK park role, after the Thai government had declared reading as a national agenda item, the Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth), which had an essential role in pushing this issue onto the national agenda, directly supported the establishment of the “Reading Culture Promotion Programme” as an important mechanism linking the public sector, civil society etc., who are stakeholders in creating books and organizing activities to reach children, youth and families. It also gave special importance to the promotion of reading among the underprivileged and community-level reading so that reading would help create spiritual well-being and learning, and build a reading culture in Thai society. The programme strategy included activities at various levels and forms such as collaboration with state agencies and the private sector to train reading promoters as change agents. The programme also supported production of materials and the distribution of quality, cheap books suitable for the development and needs of children, youth and families. It also supported organizations in various areas nationwide to organize reading promotion activities and support people's access to good quality reading resources etc.

In conclusion, continuous attempts from organizations and agencies in society promoted a reading culture among Thai people. Four factors were given importance: the promotion of producing good books and materials; the creation of distribution channels to reach children, families and communities; the training of reading promoters; and reading promotion activities including research on these factors.

Information obtained from the literature review combined with a study of follow-up reports for the Reading Culture Promotion Programme, prompted the researcher to question whether the abovementioned factors were sufficient to create a reading culture among people in communities and whether there were other pieces to the jigsaw. In order to answer such questions, the researcher looked for additional information by an in-depth study of interesting cases under the Reading Culture Promotion Programme which were successful to a certain degree in the community.<sup>2</sup> The synthesis found some initial facts that further clarified details of the creation of a reading culture and indicated **factors that the researcher considered important to the creation of a reading culture. However**, since this research was limited in time and data, the researcher would like to present these findings as a conceptual framework or theoretical assumption, leading to further study about the creation of a reading culture.

## **5. The Necessary Conditions in Promoting a Reading Culture**

Necessary conditions mean the most important or essential factors to create the desired result. In this case, the desired result is a culture of reading, not only “reading” at the individual level, but also the creation of a culture of a group of people—a family or a community—therefore involving systems of value, belief, transfer, reproduction and innovation. The study found that the promotion of reading culture had two essential or necessary conditions, which must be seen as important and must be present in the work process of agencies organizing reading promotion activities.

### **5.1 Having a social relations structure supports reading activities**

True and sustainable continuous reading needs support from the system of relations, which must be informal rather than formal, and free, comfortable and friendly – be it at home, school, library, reading corner etc. Although we already know that the physical space is related to reading, this study confirms that physical

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<sup>2</sup> The “Creative Book Box” reading campaign by the Rabudbai Group in Ranong province and the “Where’s the folk tale?” reading campaign by the King Kan Bai Group in Uttaradit province, sponsored by: the Reading Culture Promotion Programme, Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth)

structures must have an atmosphere of social relations or informal relations, which make people feel comfortable and free and also feel that they are not being deliberately stimulated to read. People feel at ease in a friendly atmosphere and feel that they can read books without worrying that they might be criticized or that they have to read within a designated time period etc.

The study also found that projects which gave importance to the development of social relations in the reading promotion process at home, school, or mobile library, such as the Rabudbai Group's project in Ranong, obviously helped the continuous and progressive development of the reading habit. Success was clearly shown in the social relations among family, friends, activity organizers etc., despite the fact that the physical resources of libraries, books etc., were simple and did not require a huge budget.

When considering the process of culture emergence and development in general, it was found that in order for something to be maintained as a culture, it must occur in the midst of people's learning. People will transfer knowledge and learn from one another unknowingly in the manner of absorbing (value system, belief system). So reading promotion in schools, which often uses formal activities such as integrating reading into the subjects taught in class, well-arranged libraries, the arranging of specific reading times etc, does not guarantee the emergence of a reading culture, if the activities neglect to create relations among persons involved in the reading culture creation process. Moreover, if such activities take place within the teacher-student power relation, it will be difficult for reading behaviour to continue outside school, making continuous reading behaviour in people's way of life, as stated in the definition, out of question.

From this synthesis, the promotion of reading culture must encourage the gathering of social groups at home, in school, in business establishments etc., with the condition that they must be informal, comfortable and free. Therefore, it is not necessary that reading promotion must start off with reading activities such as the setting up of readers' club, library activities etc. Organizers should create reading behaviour through other activities or arrange activities focused on gathering the target group members by their topic of interest. Then organizers can link reading to that activity, especially by making it in line with the needs and wants of the people's lifestyle (studying or taking an exam, career, entertainment etc.) and by holding it in an atmosphere of good relations among group members at home, in school, in the community, in business establishments etc.

We can also initially assume from the study that social relations have an

influence on the creation of a reading culture because relations in a group help create fun in reading and support knowledge transfer and exchange as well as resulting in the expansion of ideas and imagination. It also often takes place unknowingly in the manner of absorption; hence the target group might not be able to say when they started to love reading.

### **5.2 Mechanisms support, stimulate and follow up reading**

Another necessary condition linked with the one above (5.1) involves a mechanism comprised of persons with good relations with the target group, who encourage the target group to feel comfortable, not stressful or serious, and act in a friendly way during the reading activity. However, the study and initial conclusion indicated that, in order to bring about the reading culture, the individual mechanism to promote it must have certain characteristics:

(1) They must have a previous good relationship and familiarity with the target group. Parents or adults with whom the children were familiar or to whom they were close were appropriate persons. However, persons outside the family, if acquainted with them, could also be the reading promotion mechanism. Moreover, such familiarity (with family members or outsiders) must not only make the target group experience closeness and trust, but also see the aptitude, wants, habits, nature and context of the target group. This is because information about the target group is important in designing activities appropriate to the target group's nature and allows reading promotion activities to be more suitable for their condition (wants, likes, beliefs etc.). This would ensure a more sustainable creation, development and absorption of the culture. So support for the project from those who already have this social capital increases the chances of success.

(2) They must have a good understanding of the learning process and know that reading was one channel among many channels of human learning (such as listening, watching, doing etc.). Each channel has its strong and weak points and different appeal. From the case study, it was noticed that the activities by the Rabudbai Group showed an understanding of learning; hence it was able to promote the learning process through well-selected content and stimulation methods and generate a lot of reading in the target group. Especially when linked with an understanding of the target group's nature, habits and basic characteristics as mentioned in (1), it makes reading delightful, fun and impressive for the target group. If this occurs continuously, it can be absorbed as a system values reading, leading to behaviour, persistent values and culture.

(3) They must have abilities and skills in management enabling them to work according to plan and follow steps to create learning, and be flexible to change and able to solve problems arising from activities and the learning process by managing available resources including the social capital and funds from outside organizations (such as the government, development organizations, business sector, local administrative organizations etc.). The case study of the Rabudbai Group found that the group had advanced management skills – not only in administration but also the ability to manage the learning process and recognize the importance of follow-up activities. These were important in adjusting various factors to be dynamic in inducing learning. The degree to which the activity organizer could adapt and apply depended on their understanding of the learning process and their ability to manage towards the goal.

## **6. Sufficient Conditions to Promote a Reading Culture**

Even when necessary conditions are in place, a lack of sufficient conditions will negatively affect the chance of achieving the desirable result, because necessary conditions are able to achieve a result only when linked or integrated with sufficient conditions. This study found that the following sufficient conditions to promote a reading culture.

### **6.1 The existence of both direct and indirect activities to promote reading**

“Activities” are regarded as the space that allows learning through the reading promotion mechanism, as stated in (5.2), to create learning. They also help the development of social relations among people. Hence activities are important in supporting and accelerating the development of relations and further learning. However, the study found that activities to promote the creation of a reading culture must have the following important characteristics.

(1) Activities must be varied in order to respond to the target group’s diversity; reading can be integrated harmoniously into these activities. The study found that activities did not need a direct emphasis on reading in name or in content. They could be activities that the target group was already interested in and then reading could be linked to the things that the target group liked or was interested in. Therefore the activity organizer must have the ability and skill to link the activity to reading and make use of other things that the target group is interested in and wants to learn.

(2) Activities must link reading to the nature of children, who were the target group in the case study. Activities are successful because the activity organizer had a good understanding of learning and the nature of children's learning. Knowing that the children had curiosity and imagination, they organized activities that stimulated these characteristics and linked them to reading. They made reading the way to respond to curiosity and to expand children's imagination; therefore reading behaviour occurred smoothly and naturally rather than by force, control, or assignment, which yielded a specific and unsustainable result. Methods of giving rewards or marketing tactics applied in some activities from the private sector did not yield similar sustainable results. Moreover, the result of linking reading to curiosity and imagination was that reading also became a tool to create and further stimulate the target group's ideas and imagination. Reading in this case was not just to read words and read them well, but also to develop a person's quality of thought and ability.

(3) Activities, in order to be successful, must analyze the family and community context so that they are appropriate and suitable for the specific conditions and are managed according to the context. Organizers should not just use the same activity over and over to anyone anywhere, but apply and adapt in a learner-centred manner. For the activity organizer mechanism to create an activity, they must have social relations and social capital with the target group and their context (family and community). Therefore it was hard for the training of reading volunteers to avoid developing the characteristics stated in (5.2). This is especially true when the aim is to get reading volunteers who do not just help people read words but also read to develop their quality of thought etc.

(4) The promotion of a reading culture, especially at the community level, must seek local support from individuals and organizations. If an activity can link to supporting factors in the community, the chance of success is greater. Therefore the activity mechanism, be it a person or an organization with funding, must have social capital in the form of trust from the community. Having that condition in place boosts the chance of the activity being sustainable. However, activities directly promoting reading might not be a sufficiently wide base to seek co-operation, therefore activities must link reading to other things that support community activities.

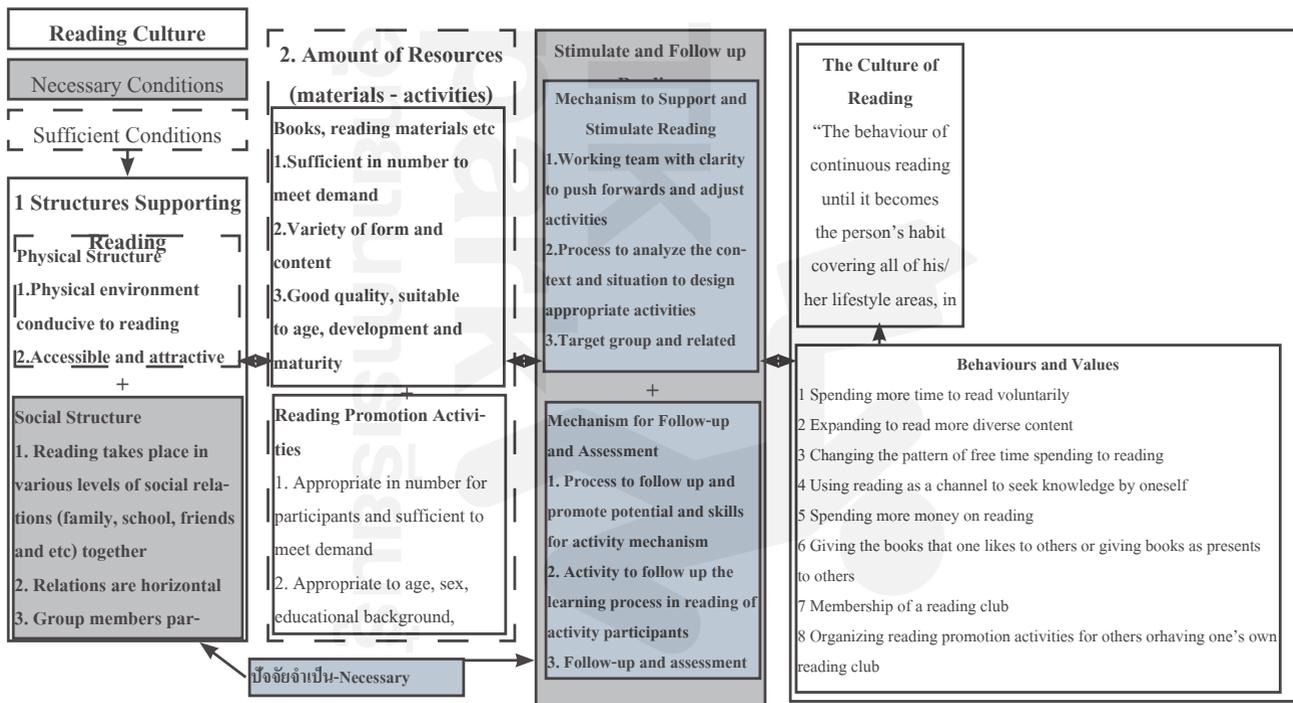
(5) The study quite clearly found that it would be hard for reading to become a culture, if reading promotion activities did not create an impact in people's minds such as delight, happiness or pride. Since it is human nature to pursue happiness, participating in activities must initially create delight and happiness; therefore activities directly aimed at promoting reading tended to be less successful, especially

among target groups who were not familiar with reading or thought that reading was boring.

## **6.2 Sufficient Resources and Quality**

The more diverse the quality of resources used in a reading promotion activity, the more chance there is to create continuous reading because the variety opens the space for more diverse thinking and imagining. This was especially true in the case of activities which organizers could link to reading to stimulate curiosity and imagination. Although sufficient resources are a matter of great importance, the study found that resources were a secondary factor. The case study showed that, to have the necessary conditions, social relations and effective mechanisms, helped promote reading behaviour more continuously than resource quality. In some case studies, handmade books that were not beautiful could better stimulate reading and create imagination. Therefore, giving the main emphasis to developing book quality might actually be less important than developing innovation in activities to promote social relations and reading. (A handmade book by a mother, for example, will have more impact on the child's mind according to a case study)

The data from abovementioned study results yields this figure:



## 7. Observations and Recommendations

The study of factors enabling a reading culture, through synthesis of data obtained from a literature review and monitoring and assessment of reading promotion activities as well as in-depth case studies, yielded some observations. The researcher therefore would like to make the following recommendations for activities to promote a reading culture.

7.1 The creation of a reading culture at the community level needs a deep understanding of the community context, hence the reading promotion mechanism, be it an individual or organization, must have knowledge and understanding of the community's learning process, community culture, and techniques for community work in order to create activities suitable to the real context of the community way of life. Undifferentiated operations based on the same blueprint or focusing only on the desirable activity (in this case, reading books) which ignore the community context and conditions narrow the chance of success.

In addition, some factors promoting reading are different from one another, especially between the reading promotion factors for individuals and those for communities. The latter are more difficult and complicated and depend greatly on knowledge and understanding of the community context.

7.2 The study found that various activities still had a rather unclear definition framework of the word "reading". Some suggested it was book reading while others included reading in other media such as the internet, digital materials etc. More importantly, the goal of reading was also unclear; some activities focused on literacy and reading words well or spending more time in reading, whilst the ultimate goal of reading promotion must make it clear that "reading" means reading that leads to development of the quality of life. It should be a channel of learning that enables individuals to "think and read" and take more responsibility for their own lives. In other words, reading should be for the development of people's knowledge and potential in various thinking skills (such as criticizing, analyzing, imagining etc.), which are important benefits that are better served by reading than by other learning channels (such as listening and watching).

This observation came from the research and literature review which found that a considerable number of activities gave weight to the promotion of literacy or reading fluently, to reading more pages, and to spending more time on reading. Although the reading skill is important, it is the basic duty of the education manager (the Ministry of Education), therefore other agencies should step beyond that to promote reading at the level of thinking, reading to open up a channel of leaning etc.

The lack of clarity in this point results in activities that lack any model to develop readers' thinking potential. Even the meaning of the phrase "reading culture" remained unclear because the word "culture" itself was still understood differently in many dimensions and connotations of meaning. There is therefore still the chance that there are different understandings. As for the author, reading at the level of being a culture is not reading by the individual but a reading culture contains the keywords of group-formation, sustainability and continuous development.

(4) Reading promotion activities should distinguish between target groups so that the promotion is suitable and appropriate. From the study, it was noticed that clear classification of the target group had an effect on inventing and organizing activities in such a way that they would better respond to needs. This is because the activities of different groups may have similar necessary conditions but different sufficient conditions. Target groups might be classified in at least three ways, and the reading promotion activity organizer should analyze what kind of activity his/her target group wanted in order to develop their reading, as followed:

A. Activities for new readers: These activities help those who read very little and are not good at reading to have the skill and ability, gain a good impression, and see the fun and the importance and value of reading more.

B. Activities for existing readers: These activities help those who already have reading skills and can read fluently to further expand their reading habits and conditions and to love and benefit from reading until reading becomes a bigger part of their way of life.

C. Activities for frequent readers: These activities help those who already love reading and usually read a lot to further develop their thinking skills such as analyzing, criticizing, imagining etc. from reading, so that they could further develop their potential into writing, analyzing and extending ideas from reading etc.

(5) Another important tool to develop in the process of promoting a reading culture is creating qualitative indicators that allow follow-up and self-assessment by concerned parties. This is because working to promote a culture is a continuous mission that would take time. Working without indicators to guide or reflect changes will obstruct work progress. However, the indicators created must be able to truly reflect changes, so they must come from a true understanding of the factors and conditions related to reading, the value of reading and the understanding of cultural dimensions.

(6) More research should be conducted to seek information on creating innovations to support the promotion of a reading culture in parallel with new media changes. Since social relations are a necessary condition for creating a reading

culture, research on reading promotion in line with the online community or social media would therefore be useful and important to the present and future changes of reading culture development.

(7) The campaign for a new image and value of reading should also be given importance, in order to eradicate the old image. The study found that “reading” in Thai society retained the myths that obstruct the promotion of a reading culture such as the ideas that reading is boring, reading is not fun, reading is a channel to find information and knowledge (not a channel for fun or pleasure), reading is a matter for students not for daily life etc. Therefore research should be conducted to get information that would support a change in attitude, in parallel with activity organizing. This should not be a campaign without activities to back it up nor activities without supporting work to promote a change in attitude in society.

### **Conclusion : Think big, don’t think small**

This article was composed and adapted from research and readers of this article will find that the abovementioned enabling factors for the promotion of reading culture are still micro factors found from a synthesis of activities organized by organizations and agencies in Thai society in the past. When considering “**reading**” as a “**national agenda item**”, the thinking and starting point of this important matter should be from the macro level and thoroughly linked to other important structures, organizations and systems in society. It should particularly link with education, the media and the economy, which have important roles in creating the values, beliefs and culture of society these days. We cannot think only at the micro level (individuals and communities). On the contrary, we must give importance to strategy formulation at the macro level because the factors in this level are significant in creating the enabling or obstructing factors for the birth or death of a reading culture.

Wasn’t it the education system that made Thai children not like reading? Because the children were forced to read and remember what they read to survive in exams, Thai children threw their books away after graduation. If the government and our society wanted “**readers**” whose reading will help create well-being and build the nation, we seriously need to formulate macro-level strategies for various factors and conditions to create an operational master plan for promoting a reading culture in Thai society.

So in the next ten years, the expression “Thai people don’t like reading” will be completely eradicated.

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## **Bangkok World Book Capital 2013 and the next steps of the alliance to promote reading<sup>i</sup>**

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) and the alliance to promote reading expressed their joint intention and joined forces in pushing the “Bangkok Read for Life” Campaign and the nomination of Bangkok as World Book Capital 2013 as well as creating a sustainable reading culture in Bangkok.

It is very pleasing that the active cooperation between the BMA and the alliance to promote reading resulted in the selection of Bangkok as the 13th World Book Capital for 2013 by the consensus of the UNESCO committee on 27 June 2011. Receiving this honourable award is the starting point of the commitment of the BMA and every sector of the alliance to promote reading to activities and reading promotion programme according to the proposal to UNESCO and to a sustainable reading culture for Bangkok residents as a successful programme objective.

### **The Beginning of Program**

In Thailand, every sector realizes the importance of reading as the basis for thinking and learning and intends to improve the reading situation with improved statistics that will help develop quality of personal and social life, hence the broad focus on reading promotion and books and the policy on reading promotion in every sector.

- At the national level, the government has placed reading on the national agenda by setting the second of April of every year, which is H.R.H Maha Chakri Sirindhorn’s birthday, as Love Reading Day and assigned 2009 – 2018 as the National Decade for Reading.

- The BMA has implemented a reading promotion programme under the responsibility of the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism. An action plan on

reading promotion is in line with the second strategy of the 2009-2012 BMA plan for developing the city's potential for economic competitiveness and to be a learning metropolis and with the fourth strategy on development of Bangkok as a metropolis with a good quality of life and unique culture.

Through these national and BMA policies on reading promotion, the BMA volunteered to be the coordinating centre of the alliance to promote reading to organize the Bangkok Read for Life campaign with the initial objective of nominating Bangkok for selecting as World Book Capital 2013 and the long-term objective of creating a sustainable reading culture for Bangkok people. This is regarded as a starting point, driving force and successful opportunity. The target groups of this campaign are every age and every group of people, emphasizing children and youth and marginalized groups comprehensively and equally. The slogan and theme of this program is **Bangkok Read for Life**

Read for Love: love the grass roots, love oneself, love others, love the world

Read for Knowledge: know oneself, know others, know the world

Love and know to create and develop life and society in every aspect, enjoyment, happiness and peace.

### **Objectives of program**

- To build a strong reading culture in Thai society, creating awareness of the value of reading as an important tool for changing one's life, building the capacity of people and society for the sustainable development of the quality of life for all people in every aspect including the economy, culture, health and intelligence. Reading will be promoted in the daily life of Thai people until it is a habit especially among children and youth.

- Reading is used as tool to sustain intelligence, creating systematic thinking processes in the Thai people that can synthesize rationally, understand the dynamic, complex and rapidly-changing world, react promptly, and respond appropriately.
- Reading is used as condition to build love, understanding and sympathy among different groups and to resolve conflicts and continuously create serenity in people's minds through a cooperative forum of close networks involving both public and private sectors and foreign organizations.
- Being the World Book Capital will be an inspiration and important destination for people from Thailand and the region. It will also stimulate them to create reading awareness for life-long learning and adaptation and allow them to stand with dignity amid globalization.

### **Strategy driving the project of the BMA reading alliance**

The drive for the project from 2011 to 2013 toward achieving the goal of being the World Book Capital 2013 and creating of long term sustainable reading culture has been implemented according to 5 Big Moves:

#### **First strategy: Public communication for a shift in the process of social perception**

It is expected that every group of people recognize the importance of reading, change attitudes and values towards a love of reading through public communication in a variety of forms using all branches and forms of media both off line, on line, traditional and new media to effectively access target groups especially family groups who lay the foundation for reading from childhood.

#### **Second strategy: Establishment of a clear ongoing policy**

The BMA accepts the role of core central agency specifying policy to give serious support reading with budget and coordination of the promotion of reading

with various allies. BMA administrators will be a model for the campaign

**Third strategy: Building participation of networks to promote reading**

All sectors support and encourage each other, develop all involved personnel professionally from upstream to downstream and every sector brings together the resources they have in terms of physical and mental strength, wisdom, materials etc. to work forcefully together toward the final result. The BMA has established a reading alliance coordination centre, which will be the centre for coordination, cooperation and full support for the alliance network. There will also be an exchange of information on reading promotion and book development.

**Fourth strategy: Development and extension of space for reading promotion**

Existing spaces for reading including various kinds of libraries and book stores already operating in every area will be developed in quality, readiness to provide effective services and to opening new spaces for reading appropriate for the way of life in a large city, so that every group of people can access reading with maximum ease.

**Fifth strategy: Creating a diversity of reading promotion activities**

Continuous creation of a diversity of reading promotion activities where “everyone reads, everywhere, all the time” in families, schools, educational institutions, place of religion, public spaces, enterprises and various agencies to promote reading using techniques and methods to reach every group and every age in an ongoing and appropriate way.

All these 5 Big Moves are guidelines to drive the promotion of reading and books of the BMA and the alliance to promote reading from 2013 onward. The overall plan of the project was drafted by bringing the plans of each organization for mutual communication and learning exchange. The overall plan was fully viewed together to fill incomplete sections and set the plan for the central unit which the BMA supports. In order for all strategies to be developed to reach concrete results,

the committee will set up an evaluation of the 5 strategies every year and will periodically consider adjustments to the plan both for the alliance to promote reading and the centre so that it accords with the situation at different times.

## **Implementation**

The BMA has implemented the project according to the 5 Big Moves by dividing it into 2 phases: operations before submitting the proposal to UNESCO and operations after announcement of the selection results.

### **Operations before and after submitting reading promotion proposal to UNESCO**

The BMA has emphasized operations on building All for Read and arranged activities to support the participation of networks through seminars and learning exchanges:

- A committee has been appointed to define strategies and guidelines for developing Bangkok as a Reading Metropolis (according to BMA Directive 3598/2010 on 22 September 2010) to move forward the Bangkok Read for Life campaign and to nominate Bangkok for selection as World Book Capital 2013.

- A seminar was held for allies in the reading promotion network to move on 28 October 2010 at the Chaophraya Park Hotel, Bangkok. 93 organizations involved in reading promotion and 150 people attended in this activity. The consensus of the meeting was that every organization agreed with the nomination of Bangkok for selection as World Book Capital 2013.

- 2 brainstorming activities in the Bangkok Read for Life campaign were fora for exchanging things learned, ideas and experience among groups in the network alliance to promote reading and to disseminate information on practical approaches from young people and teachers, to continue to drive the project according to the strategic plan established by the committee.

- A participatory brainstorming activity on “Best Practice in Reading Promotion in Schools” on Monday 17 January 2011 at Miracle Grand Convention Hotel, Bangkok presented examples of best practices in reading promotion in schools with the objective of creating an opportunity for teachers to exchange and learn techniques, lessons and experience in reading promotion in schools. This would help to drive the reading agenda in schools and among groups of children at various levels more effectively.

- A participatory brainstorming activity on “Reading and Lifestyle of the New Generation” aimed to provide opportunity for young people to meet famous current writers who are socially accepted. This led to the building of inspiration and interest of young people in reading and being a writer. It was a forum for young people to get information and reflect their opinions, behaviour, interests, lifestyle etc. in their learning that is an important component in driving the Bangkok Read for Life campaign. This activity was held on Friday 21 January 2011 at Miracle Grand Convention Hotel, Bangkok.

• A reading assembly was held for the Bangkok Read for Life campaign on Tuesday 1 February 2011 at Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre Bangkok, to gather the ideas of organizations, agencies and people from all professions who have a role in reading promotion to define guidelines and drive the project to achieve the set goals.

• The BMA and the Publishers and Booksellers Association of Thailand held the BMA Book Fair during the 39th National Book Week on 25 March-6 April 2011 at Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre. The public were invited to sign their names in support of the Bangkok Read for Life campaign and the World Book Capital 2013 campaign. There was an activity to recommend books that should be read according to age and sticking pins in reading areas that are known.

In order for the recommendations from reading assembly on 1 February 2011 to take concrete form, the reading promotion network alliance, with state, private

and people's sectors, made a firm undertaking to work together. The BMA held a signing ceremony for a Memorandum of Understanding for the Bangkok Read for Life campaign on 31 March 2011 at the Central Stage, Hall A, Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre. Initially 76 organizations signed and the project logo of a kan kluay elephant was launched. Reading promotion Brand Ambassadors, where the committee coordinated with lovers of reading with a volunteer spirit and well-known names to be reading models for the public, and to campaign, publicize and invite the public to take an interest in creating a reading culture, were classified into 6 groups including children, teenagers, working age people, experienced people and religious representatives. It is therefore regarded as the day of declaring the intention and undertaking to join in pushing the Bangkok Read for Life and World Book Capital 2013 campaigns.

- The Bangkok Governor travelled to submit the reading promotion proposal documents which the committee had prepared with the approval of the Bangkok Governor to the UNESCO Director-General, Madame Irina Bokova, on 29 April 2011, at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France.

- A meeting of the network alliance for the Bangkok Read for Life campaign was held to define the direction to drive the project after the undertaking to joint operations between the alliance to promote reading and the BMA. 4 additional organizations signed the Memorandum of Understanding, namely the Vimuttayalaya Institute, Kasem Bundit University, Suan Pakkad Museum, and the Women Journalists Club, on 10 May 2011 at the Emerald Hotel.

- The BMA launched the [www.bangkokreadforlife.com](http://www.bangkokreadforlife.com) public relations website on 21 June 2011 for the public to know about movement in the project and as a media channel for the public to communicate and exchange opinions independently.

- The BMA has begun to operationalize the fourth strategy, providing a reading spaces in every place, developing the existing reading spaces and extending new reading spaces with the concept that Bangkok has the capital of reading promotion providing services for Bangkok residents including 33 learning libraries, 7 mobile library vehicles and 115 houses of books. However, for an effective campaign to achieve project objectives, it is necessary to join forces with the alliance to promote reading from many sectors and arrange the initial activity to increase reading spaces, namely the Read on the Move activity in the following forms.

- The Read on the Move activity is consistent with the Bangkok lifestyle involving daily travel to conduct business. The study found that people have to spend up to 107 minutes per day per person travelling. To enhance the benefits and add value to this travelling time, the Read on the Move activity was launched on 22 June 2011 at Lan Khon Mueang, in front of the BMA Office.

- The promotion of reading in taxis, with the cooperation of taxi groups and networks, has in its pilot phase, 9 taxi cooperatives with 500 taxis. Project stickers and campaign messages to promote a love of reading attached to the taxis and book pouches installed in the taxis will be completed by July 2011. There is a plan to increase the numbers of taxis taking part in this activity in the next phase. Meanwhile, the working group is moving to increase reading areas in buses by cooperating with the Bangkok Mass Transit Authority and to increase and develop 30 more reading areas in prisons, reformatories, hospitals, centres, foundations, and disability libraries in order to expand reading opportunities to the disadvantaged.

- Allies in reading promotion are linked to various agencies to increase public reading areas, namely Bangkok Bank, Taxi Cooperatives Network, Bangkok Mass Transit Authority, the National Broadcasting Service of Thailand (NBT), True Corporation Public Company Limited and Bangkok Airport Company.

At this time, the BMA and the alliance to promote reading are continually creating various reading promotion activities according to the proposal submitted to

UNESCO and other strategies for the accomplishment in concrete form of project objectives and to drive forward strong cooperation in the next phase.

- Increasing and developing more effective reading areas and providing enough books in the project for activities. Therefore, we have requested support and cooperation from all sectors. The program has been supported by the alliance to promote reading and the public sector for book donations, book sales at special prices, book donation boxes and “volunteers for book conservation” to manage the books.

- In addition to above action, there are also other activities for driving the program forward.

- The BMA in cooperation with HSBC Bank opened a Green Library at Chaloe Phra Kiat Her Majesty the Queen’s 60th Anniversary Park, Rom Klao community, Lat Krabang, on 3 June 2011.

- A Children’s Book Festival by Double A Company on 31 May 2011 at Double A Book Tower.

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Signing Ceremony between TK park and the Office of Culture, Sports and Tourism on 21 June 2011 at the Learning Auditorium TK park, for Book House Volunteers Training, etc.

### **Action after the selection announcement: the next steps of the BMA and the Alliance to Promote Reading**

The short term objective of the Bangkok Read for Life campaign was to nominate Bangkok to be successfully selected as World Book Capital 2013; this was achieved when Bangkok was selected by the committee as the 13th World Book Capital 2013. This is regarded as the success of every sector which actively worked together. It was the starting point and an undertaking between Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and every sector of the alliances to promote reading to carry out activities and reading promotion projects according to the proposal submitted to UNESCO as well as a commitment to create the basis of a sustainable reading culture

for Bangkok residents which is the long term objective.

The BMA and the alliance to promote reading continue to follow the established strategies with additional energy derived from our pride. However, the BMA had previously explained to the alliance to promote reading and the people that even if Bangkok had not been selected, the Bangkok Read for Life campaign would continue because it supports BMA plans and responds to the reading promotion policy for people's quality of life and national development. The policy and its reinforcement with the World Book Capital 2013 designation have more determinedly and strongly pushed the BMA and 89 agencies in the alliance to promote reading to campaign widely for reading promotion to reach all groups of Bangkok residents comprehensively and equally. Any organization desiring to become a reading promotion ally of the BMA can request membership at any time.

Today, 89 organizations of the alliance to promote reading have already signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Bangkok Read for Life and World Book capital 2013 campaigns and other organizations are in the coordination period to sign the MOU. There is actually intention and determination in every organization to work together with the BMA. Since some organizations are already working in reading promotion, namely TK park, the Reading Culture Promotion Programme of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, the Publishers and Booksellers Association of Thailand, SCG Foundation, CP All Public Company Limited, the Stock Exchange of Thailand etc. The members of the alliance to promote reading can be classified as follows: 10 government agencies, 10 private groups, 3 banks, 6 mass media organizations, 11 foundations, 13 associations, 16 publishers, 5 religious organizations and 15 universities.

In order to create diverse and sustainable reading promotion activities according to the plan, the following joints actions were taken.

• The BMA organized a celebratory press conference on the occasion of Bangkok's designation as the 13th World Book Capital 2013 on 5 July 2011 at the Rattanakosin Room, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Hall. This was to thank the committee, the alliance to promote reading, the reading promotion ambassadors, concerned agencies and people who supported and promoted the programme through to its success as a short term objective. Furthermore, it declared the starting point and undertaking between the BMA and the alliance to promote reading on the activities and reading promotion programme according to the proposal submitted to UNESCO and on the commitment to create the successful basis for a sustainable reading culture for Bangkok residents, which is the long term objective.

**Project undertakings in which the BMA and the alliance to promote reading will work together after the designation of Bangkok as World Book Capital 2013**

Project undertakings in which the BMA and the alliance to promote reading will work together after the designation of Bangkok as World Book Capital 2013 are classified into 2 groups.

• **Reading promotion plans of each Reading Promotion Ally.** The plans of the alliance to promote reading have been combined together to ensure the continuity and diversity of the campaign and its ability to reach all age groups and lead to reading, the reading habit and reading culture promotion.

- Book Start project: Children's Book Foundation
- Identifying common house books activity: We are happy group
- "Bangkok Young Star Writers" project: BMA
- Building Young Readers project: Education Department, BMA
- Love Reading Community Network project: Bang Bua Community and Bang Khen Community Network

- “Opening the World of Reading with World Literature” project:  
Nanmee books Co.
- Children’s Book Fair and International Book Fair: The Publishers and Booksellers Association of Thailand
- Children and Youth Book Festival: The Publishers and Booksellers Association of Thailand
- Literature Sapings Camp project : CP All Public Company Limited
- Children’s and Youth Book Competition “Rak Luk Award” Rak Luk Group
- Road Show for reading promotion in schools: Sky Books Company
- Mobile Library project, Bangkokhen community: Kasetsart University
- Librarians Relations in Neighbouring Communities Building Project: Central Library, Srinakharinwirot University
- Second hand books donation activity: Mirror Foundation
- Old books telling 100 years of stories of the Fine Arts Department: National Library
- Voice Library for the Visually Disabled: Dhurakij Pundit University, Sri Pathum University, Thammasat University, Kasetsart University and Srinakharinwirot University Central Library

• **Special plans to be implemented in year 2013.** Each project is remarkable and varied and has arisen from cooperation between the BMA and the alliance to promote reading. Moreover, these projects also have an ongoing effect on reading and book development in Thailand, which forms the basis for building a sustainable reading culture according to the long term objectives.

Project Name	Main Organization	Co-organizations
1.Establishment of City Library 2. Establishment of Museum and Thai Books and Reading 3.Establishment of Reading Research Centre	BMA	All associations involved in publishing
4. Establishment of Thai Cartoon Museum	BMAThai Cartoon Association Reading Culture Promotion Program (THHF)	Thai Cartoon Institute, Foundation for Children Socially Creative Thai Cartoon Network Cartoon Book Publishers Network
5. Reading Culture Creates Thinking Culture	BMA SCG Foundation Reading Culture Promotion Program (THHF)	Writers Association of Thailand Mass Media Publishers Association Libraries and Schools in Bangkok
6. Reading Promotion in Children and Young People	Publishers Association BMA	Office of Primary Education Embassies and Foreign Cultural Organizations such as the Goethe Institute
7.Literature for Bangkokians	Writers Association Publishers Association BMA	Reading Culture Promotion Programme (THHF) Mass Media and NGOs
8.Scientific Books for Scientific Minds	The Institute for the Promotion of the Teaching of Science and Technology National Science Museum	Publishers Association Schools, Libraries and Book Stores in Bangkok
9. Mind Development Books	Office of Thai Buddhism Central Islamic Committee of Thailand Catholic Diocese Committee of Thailand	The Publishers Association and Various Organizations
10. Host for IPA Symposium 2014	Thai Library Association Publishers Association Writers Association P.E.N. International Thailand Centre	All Organizations

The plans to be prepared after Bangkok was designated World Book Capital 2013 to promote stronger cooperation in the future include establishment of a coordination centre for linking the work of reading promotion allies, ongoing campaigns, activities and projects to promote reading, activities to develop existing reading spaces, training activities for cooperating personnel training to strengthen reading promotion allies.

From the above plans, it can be seen that after Bangkok was designated World Book Capital 2013, the BMA and the alliance to promote reading must cooperate more continuously and strongly. Through the determination and commitment to create reading society, it is expected that these plans will surely achieve success in line with the stated objectives.

### **Results of Cooperation between the BMA and the alliance to promote reading**

The BMA volunteered to be the centre to drive forward the joint project with the alliance to promote reading, working together under the principle that whoever has strength, uses their strength, whoever has funds, uses their funds, and whoever has ideas, uses their ideas. Resources were pooled to create reading, to think together, to work together, to solve problems together, to take responsibility together and to gain benefit together with mutual respect and honour. All parties made an earnest commitment to the Bangkok Read for Life campaign with a sustainable reading culture for the honour of Bangkok being World Book Capital 2013. The results from their strong and ongoing collaboration include:

- The alliance to promote reading is a large and strong network and comprises a variety of organizations. This results in reading promotion activities and projects that are varied, abundant and capable of reaching people of all ages comprehensively, whether children, youth, adults, the elderly or the marginalized. The project thus reached all target groups. This point is counted as an important issue allowing Bangkok to be selected this time. On this UNESCO Director-General

Madame Irina Bokova gave her opinion on the proposal that "... this programme is rich and varied, well prepared and shows commitment to achieving results, especially the emphasis on young people, marginalized groups and the development of reading for all, with its accent on cooperation and dialogue at local, national and international levels. This programme responds perfectly to the objectives of the World Book Capital project which is attracting the attention of an increasing numbers of cities worldwide."

- The programme momentum in the form of a network alliance has led the Bangkok Read for Life campaign and sustainable reading culture promotion to success and continuity. It is expected that after 2013, Bangkok will be host to the International Publishers Association Symposium and as result of this activities and projects in the proposal, Bangkok residents will read more, there will be clearer and more concrete ongoing development of books and personnel involved in reading promotion. All involved agencies and personnel will benefit reasonably from this programme, such as writers, novelists, publishers, distributors and librarians, emphasizing that the benefit to the people is the important thing.

- The implementation of the plan of reading promotion activities and projects is more effective and valuable because there will be co-hosts from more than one organization along with supporting agencies who are the remaining reading promotion allies. Therefore, the management of reading promotion activities and projects is more cost effective through greater sharing resources in terms of budget, personnel, and operational methods, bringing more force to the development of reading and concrete success.

- The exchange of learning and vision and the sharing of experience allow each ally to promote reading by adopting, adapting and developing its own activities more effectively, leading to greater overall effectiveness as well as joint personnel training activities to make the alliance stronger. The BMA is very pleased to welcome other organizations to be additional reading promotion allies because it is realized that a larger network should have more strength in jointly creating a reading society.

- Knowledge from working together since the first projects until now has led to a model Bangkok Read for Life campaign and has achieved basic success as Bangkok has been designated as World Book Capital 2013 which is a model for other provinces and cities both at the national level and in other countries which desire to nominate themselves to be selected as World Book Capital. The committee and working teams are pleased to disseminate advice and communicate knowledge and documents as guidelines in this operation.

What the BMA and the alliance to promote reading jointly expect is a commitment to the success of the proposed plan of activities and projects. This is for the benefit of the people of Bangkok from driving forward the programme to promote strongly a reading culture in Thai society leading to changes in the way of life and the creation of a force for people and society and to develop a better sustainable quality of life for all groups of people in every aspect through reading.

Today, in the hope that our pride on being designated World Book Capital is an important encouragement and goal of the alliance to promote reading, Bangkok people, the Thai people and people in the region cooperate to build awareness of reading for learning, and of creating a reading society and making society overall a mutual leaning society in the future. It is also hoped to be an encouragement for other cities which want to be selected World Book Capital to achieve the same success as Bangkok.

Finally, The BMA would like to thank you the committee who determined the strategies and guidelines to develop the Bangkok Read for Life campaign, all members of the alliance to promote reading, the reading promotion ambassadors, working teams, involved agencies and organizations and most importantly the people of Bangkok who joined in supporting Bangkok as World Book Capital 2013 and it is very grateful to the UNESCO committee for providing this opportunity to the BMA. From now on, the cooperation between the BMA and the alliance to promote reading will be stronger for the dignity and pride and the greatest benefit for the people of Bangkok from the various reading promotion activities and projects which the BMA and the alliance to promote reading jointly implement.



## Gaps and Equity in Access to Books and Learning Sources

Chaiyosh Imsuwan (Ph.D.)

### Introduction

Any reference to the notion of ‘equality’ comes with a political implication based on the belief that everybody in society must be equal in all respects in order to achieve peaceful social co-existence and that inequity is the root of various social conflicts. The issue whether inequity exists in society or not can be verified. However, we must also understand whether such inequity is a product of natural conditions in society or whether it is due to certain artificial acts which help sustain inequality. This requires profound understanding as people who co-exist in society are fundamentally different in terms of their physicality, emotions, predispositions, status, role and duty in society. These differences constitute a natural barrier to achieving equality. Nevertheless, no matter how much we naturally differ, people as human beings must all possess equal rights as human beings and as any other member of society. This is an important issue crucial to social co-existence, especially as we live in a democratic system where equality as human beings is important. This equality refers to equal access to enjoying public services from the state. Government in a democratic system has the duty to serve the public and provide them with equal access to government services. It must not be forgotten however that the fundamental differences between citizens also hinder access to public services and without good management the gap of inequality will be hard to reduce. The Thai educational reform which began in 1999 stressed the importance of people’s opportunity and access to quality education. Looking at the past, since Thailand embarked upon a democratic system with the King as Head of State, the state has tried very hard to create equitable access to education for citizens as can be seen in the state’s attempt to eradicate illiteracy in the years following the

1932 revolution which ended the absolute monarchy. Continued adult education was also introduced, along with out-of-school education, in order to compensate for lost opportunities and provide further educational opportunities for all ages and groups in society. The attempts are by no means a failure although the challenge in ensuring equal access to education is rather complex.

### **The Current Situation Regarding Educational Opportunity for Thais**

A report from the Educational Reform Sub-Committee on the second decade of reform, regarding the task of increasing educational and learning opportunities, which was presented to the Education Reform Committee on 20 September 2010, reflected the current situation and problems in providing access to learning and education for six groups of people as summarized below.

#### 1. Pre-school children aged between 1 to 3 years.

About 97 per cent of the group receives child care from their families while 3 per cent are looked after by day-care centres. The figure changes for those aged between 3 to 5, with 79 per cent being lodged at day care centres while 21 per cent are cared for by their families. All in all, about 59.9 per cent have access to kindergarten education.

#### 2. School-age children and youth, at primary, secondary and college level.

The percentage of students who complete basic education stand at 82.6 per cent with a 1.13 dropout rate at the primary school level, 2.43 per cent at the lower secondary level and 2.16 per cent at higher secondary level. According to the sub-committee report, the reasons for students to drop out are: poor health, low mental aptitude, drugs, sexual affairs and family problems. Regarding the issue of low mental aptitude, speculation exists that this may have to do with inadequate intake of iodine by children, which negatively impacts IQ and brain development. In addition, inappropriate education

unsuited to the needs and abilities of students as well as the lack of participation in managing education pose both a problem and challenge with regards to access to education and led to the forcing of students out of the educational system.

At the vocational school level, it was discovered that the percentage of youth studying at vocational schools is much lower than those studying at regular schools. Only 81.8 per cent of vocational school students finish their studies due to obstacles ranging from low regard for vocational education with most students preferring university degrees over vocational students' brawling. This resulted in a low preference for vocational studies, and coupled with high tuition fees, poor families can hardly afford to send their children to vocational college.

At the tertiary level, 52.9 per cent of the population aged between 18 and 21 years old have access to university education. The cost for university education is rather steep, even with the availability of education loans.

### 3. Underprivileged children.

In Thailand, attempts exist to assist underprivileged children, whose numbers are considerable, be it street children, children of migrant labourers, poor students in rural areas as well as children from ethnic minority backgrounds. Despite attempts by the state to provide education to these children, access remains poor and is not widespread. This also partly depends on whether these children are willing to access the education provided or not.

### 4. Gifted and disabled children.

Although the state tries to set up specialized education centres for these children to be able to learn together with other normal students, there persist problems regarding the management of access to such educational services.

5. Adults who missed educational opportunities at school when young.

This group desires access to informal adult education. Although statistics are lacking, it is believed that the task of providing such education is hampered by the lack of clear objectives from education providers, as well as a lack of cooperation and participation from other stakeholders.

One of the crucial issues pointed out by the report is that some groups of people lack the skill and potential for learning, leaving them deprived of access to education or prevented from maximizing their learning opportunities. They also cannot access various learning sources due to their lack of readiness in terms of capital, technological know-how and tools, and the lack of an organization responsible for organizing and developing media and providing experts who will disseminate knowledge to people.

The recommendation by the subcommittee stressed the need to review the rationale and regulations as well as approach in providing education to all groups of the population in order to achieve greater access to education and the decentralization of educational management in order to enable all sectors, be they state, private, or local communities, to play a greater role in managing education and to integrate the work of various organizations as well as to create new tracks to enable people to gain greater access to education.

Nevertheless, the Thai government's attempt to reinforce educational opportunity will not succeed easily. It will however reflect the gap and inequity of access to education and elicit more thinking on the matter.

The Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education under the Ministry of Education has produced a report detailing progress in providing education to the public. It forecast

that Thailand will achieve goals which can be measured through seven following indicators:

1. Children aged 3-5 years will receive well-prepared access to education because 95.8 per cent of the population group receives services from child-care centres, schools, and centres based in Buddhist temples and mosques.
2. A high percentage of children age 6 enrol in primary school.
3. A continuous increase in the average number of years of education received by the Thai population.
4. High literacy rates with 94.9 per cent literacy for men aged 15 and above and 90.5 per cent for women aged 15 and above.
5. An increased rate of access to education amongst the poor and underprivileged.
6. Youth and adults exceed targets in education for the development of life skills.
7. The expansion of life-long learning opportunities through setting up community learning centres covering 7,409 tambons and 850 public libraries throughout the kingdom. The computer per population ratio is 57 computers for 1,000 people, with 116.7 persons out of 1,000 having computer access.

The above report from the Department of Non-Formal and Informal Education also stated the factors that will lead to achieving the goal of education for all.

1. Legal guarantees that protect the right of equal access to education for all Thais under the National Education Act.

2. Clear education policies, particularly second-decade education policies which stress the development of educational quality and standards, educational and learning opportunities, and participation from all sectors in society.

3. Adjustment of funding per head for basic education or its equivalent, which amounts to 20 per cent of the total education budget.

### **Access to Books and Learning Sources**

In considering the overall picture of the state's attempt to provide education for Thais, one can notice the efforts to create equal access to education. However, upon deeper examination into the issue of equity in the access to books and learning sources of Thai people, it cannot be denied that the book market in Thailand is rather widespread at present although there exist factors that would hinder people's access to books.

1. Book production costs in Thailand are rather high. This includes the cost of raw materials, taxes and duties which lead to higher costs for printed book.

2. Many books in the market were produced to supply particular demands and may contravene attempts to make available quality books at economical prices. The linkages between quality and medium have an impact on the level of knowledge and values of readers; without proper filtering, this can become a lingering challenge to the quality of Thai people in the future.

3. The rather limited reading comprehension of Thais is due to the fact that the average Thai reads about five non-academic books per annum and spends an average of 35 minutes per day reading. This includes the limited ability to engage in critical reading and interpretation of texts.

4. Although more, and more widely spread public libraries and community learning centres have been set up, the issues of quality and standard of services must still be considered.

5. Values and perspectives regarding the search for knowledge through various forms of reading can pose a hindrance to learning opportunities.

What must be considered is the fact that reading is not just a habit but a culture, a way of life for everybody. Without earnest development, no amount of equal services can bring about real equity.



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<sup>i</sup> This article was written for a presentation at the Thailand Conference on Reading 2011 organized by Thailand Knowledge Park

# **The development of book reading activity for promoting better life of citizen in Vietnam**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the setting of development of the nation to be industrial country in the year of 2020 by the Government, we orient to develop the nation with innovative policy engaging with concept of intelligent economy. This concept associates with professional human resource in terms of good knowledge and skillful labor for supplying national development and linking the country to international economy. It is clear that reading activity is very important canal to promote sustainable development of the country. Through long history of the nation, reading culture is established Vietnamese manner to development of the nation. Thus, it is reasonable to say that book reading activity has been providing fundamental knowledge for making new generation of Vietnamese in all aspects of life. In fact, book reading activity is usually a media canal to helping people to gain information and step by step to develop their knowledge in terms of promoting better life and engaging with international economy network.

In the case of opening the gate to Asian region and worldwide we need to make much more efforts to promote not only amount of labor but also quality of such source for supporting current need of higher quality of human resource (UNDP,

2001 and Nguyen Thang, 2002). The strategy for making better use of human resource from Vietnamese government is to establish proper way of learning through reading activity in different citizen classes. This strategy need to accord with their conditions in terms of level education, economic circumstance and others (Vu Duong Thuy Nga, 2011 b).

The Vietnamese Government is aware that promotion of reading culture is very important. Therefore, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism of Vietnam and especially library branch have been establishing strategy of the development of reading culture for period 2010 to 2020. The Government also confirmed to support reading activity whole country in order to generate new Vietnamese readers in the future. In this paper, we would like to summarize the reading activity status and to offer appropriate solutions to promote reading culture in Vietnam.

In order to set up state policies on developing reading culture in society, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism conducted investigations in 12 provinces/cities in 2010 in Vietnam.

## **OBJECTIVES**

General objective: The overall objective of this study to get reader's responses in terms of current need for book reading and which kinds of book may math to each interest group from different citizen class in different zones of the country.

Special objective:

- To determine which kind of the book and the magazine that readers would like to learn most from students, their parents and adults (as a mean of non-student reader) especially which kinds of each of such group readers like best.

- To know if people use their leisure time for reading book to promote their learning and making their relaxation.
- To evaluate the role of parent to pursuit their children to learn from the book and magazine sources for gaining knowledge in different fields of their lives.
- To determine the current status of library service in different locations of the country and establish appropriate solutions both short and long terms for development of library systems to offer an opportunity for people to go to library to read books especially in remote areas of the country.
- To establish a new policy for motivating reading activity in our society in order to promote better life of the citizen.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This survey made by Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism of Vietnam to seeks an answer for the following the main research question. The question is that what are major obstacles to increase reading activity in the country and what can be done to help ordinary people better benefit from policy of reading culture promotion. The answer to this main question should be attempted through a survey as a case study. How will each question be achieved? We assuming that the research questions to be addressed by the survey have been clearly identified. On the other hand, the purpose of the methodology section is to show how these questions would be determine in the most rigorous way possible. Achieving the set objectives requires data of high quality and sound methodologies. This survey will therefore plan to collect primary data on the library system in different provinces in the country.

- The survey with questionnaires included 18 concerned issues for asking students, 10 other ones for their parents and 20 ones for getting responses from adults carried out in different provinces of the country. Participatory development

communication (PDC) was a powerful tool to facilitate this process. This communication process brings together all readers in a dialogue and exchange of ideas on their concerned read activity. It was the key used to collect information. To minimise any unwanted biases, agenda had made, in situation according to consensus of participants.

- Traditional data gathering methods such as group representative meetings, semi-structure investigation by library visiting, structured interviews using questionnaires. The issues of these are related to each of objectives.

- Data/information is shared and used immediately at the grass-root levels, and processed systematically for later used in documentation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The consideration of the role of the reading culture in developing the nation**

Although Vietnamese people has been cultivating the soil and rearing animals for thousands of year for establishing their lives in the country. However, sustainability of the development of the nation especially the poor areas of the country has been threatening by the unumung population pressure and the destructive impacts of the sequence flood and typhoon in the tropical monsoon season both directly and indirectly (World Bank Vietnam. 2002). Vietnam has been consistently pursuing the radical economic reforms known as Doi Moi since 1986 and has consequently achieved impressive economic growth rates and fast poverty reduction (GSO, 2001). The economy grew at an average annual growth rate of about 7.0 percent since the country are the full membership of WTO in the year of 2007. The Vietnam economy changes thanks to the open-door policies coupled with microeconomic reforms, which have radically changed the economic incentives system (World Bank

Vietnam.1999). Equally important, economic growth has been broadly shared, resulting in a sharp poverty reduction (World Bank Vietnam. 2001).

The resolution number 5 of the term VIII of Vietnamese Communist Party remarked that “A culture is important spiritual basic to development of society and it is not only motivation of social and economic development but also orientation of each person in the way of approaching higher knowledge and better life”. In fact, the Government has been supporting more projects to conserve Vietnamese culture and remain national and international heritages and traditional festivals located in all provinces of the country.

Concerning to reading activity for adopting technology transfer to farmers whom are consisted about 70 percents of Vietnamese population;

the government has much more effort to help them for increasing their incomes. As a result of current policy of Vietnamese government for promoting scientific and technology activities, there are many new techniques and technologies in agricultural sector, which are recommended by all Vietnamese institutions annually. In paradox, such technologies seem to keep in media resources for researchers and students in reading but not so succeed in application especially in poor farmer communities. We assume that it is necessary to promote reading activity for farmers in order to make better use of current technique and technology sources in village commune. Because, the poor people is not easy to approach to library for using of this resource to increase their income.

In the case of economic blooming worldwide, the nation is associated with new concept of intelligent economy. This mean that it is require much more labours with high knowledge and professional skill. Thus, the development of program of education and professional training is the first priority of our Government and it should pertain to reading promotion not only in the school but also in diversity of reading activity in our society.

In recent years, Vietnamese citizens especially villagers recognize in long term run that firstly, they need to learn for the reduction of poverty, free from less educated fate and promotion quality of their life. They are aware that through reading activity they could learn much more about life skills such as how to use electricity in safety way and how to increase their income from their local resources effectively and other useful skills. Secondly, no one can decline the fact that the climate change is occurring so quick and it impacts all nations and each family in negative way. So the reading activity provides more powerful canal to enhance aware of people to treat harmony way with nature and biosphere. Lastly, in higher level of nation development, each person or/and family could not live alone and so community development programme is one of priority in our policy. The establishment of learning programmes in society need more books and magazines for such strategy and thus the raising of the campaign of book reading is very necessary in the way of achievement of better life for the citizen.

The president Ho Chi Minh said that “one nation has less-educated citizen as a mean that the nation is a weak one” and he also remarked that “learning is a long process, such as learning at school, learning oneself by reading books and learning from others in society as well”.

## **Current status of book reading facility and reading requirement of citizen in Vietnam**

### **The reading facility in Vietnam**

There is a library system of from central government to local locations in Vietnam. The system has been servicing for book reading requirement of all citizen on different classes effectively. Some new models of book services have been applied. For instance, the model of rotation of the book has been done for increasing number of commune bookcase in poor regions or the family bookcase has been established in some locations. We also call upon the private library taking their activity in poor areas in order to support reading culture in our society. All such new models of the reading culture have done effectively. According to survey of the Ministry of Culture – Sport – Tourism of the Vietnamese Government in 2010, there were 17,936 public libraries, 300 university libraries, 24,746 school libraries and many specific libraries belonged to different Ministries of the Government in Vietnam. The national library system consists of national library; province and district ones. Each Ministry of Center Government also has special library to supply information to their working activities. In the village, commune book case system as a mean of public library has been establishing under supporting of the local government to offer an essential book and magazine to farmers especially in remote region of the rural areas. The goal of the development of this commune book is the eradication of poverty through literacy enhancement for poorest people especially minority ethnics. In fact, this small library has been improved the overall reading culture in the locality and to serve as an extension for learning beyond the classroom by offering school textbooks to students who do not have access to them at school and at home. This commune book case system is used effectively and villagers are more participating in book reading activity. Each school/university in Vietnam has their own library and the readers of such consist of

mainly students, teachers and other concerned professionals who spend their reading time for improvement of their knowledge and other aspects of life that they could not learn during lecture times.

The publication has been developing both book quantity and book quality. This activity has been engaging with requirement of readers and it is true that through this canal, the educational and training programs of the Government have been approaching to all peoples in our society. Such activity also supports to promote people's cultural standard and to help poor citizens to increase their incomes from adopting appropriate technologies in their business. For enhancement of reading activity of Vietnamese young pioneer, we publish more kinds of book pertained to their psychologies to make proper book environment for developing this generation naturally.

It is interesting that Vietnamese people is aware of the role of book in the way of development of each person well. The citizen would like to select books and magazines with high quality. According to result of the survey, there are 20 percents of Vietnamese family having their own bookcase in total. And there are 25 % of citizens used one hour for reading book.

However, it still remains some weakness of reading activity in the country. For example, we recognize that the development reading culture is very important but we now have just starting to make it proper. The number of book per one citizen is still poor. The villager in remote areas is very difficult to approach to media resources especially library. The school library still poor in book source both amount of book and magazine and quality of book service as well.

### **The use of leisure time for reading books in the society**

The Vietnamese citizen seems to be very busy in their works event in free times after working hard in the day. However they are ready like to use such time for learning by reading books in different aims. The table 1 shows the use of the free time of students and adults taken their mind to read the books and other concerned from media resources. According to the outcomes of the survey, there were 59 percent of pupils use their leisure time for reading books. The act of learning by themselves and participating extra class for learning subject are 30 and 42 percents respectively. It seems to be that students would like to learn much more intensive way. The survey results also indicated that there were 56.8 percent of non-pupils (adults) used their free time for reading books. It is true that the current need of book reading of Vietnamese people is high in term of self-learning and entertain ment activities. An ordinary people who spend much more times for an earn one's living and they seem to be worn out after working hard during the working day. Therefore, they like to watch TV with more easy and convenient ways for not only getting information and but also doing their relaxing.

Table 1: The use of the leisure time of pupils and adults for reading books

Reading activities		Percentage (%)
Responses of pupil's readers		
1	Book reading	59
2	Learning by themselves	30
3	Extra class for learning	42
4	Non-reading activities*	60
Responses of non- pupil's readers (adults)		
5	Book reading	56,8
6	Web watching	35
7	Learning by themselves	20
8	TV and/or video Watching	43
9	Other activities**	68

Notes: \* House work to helping parent, gaming, TV and/or video watching, club activities, web watching and free doing of some habits

\*\* and free doing of some habits, gaming, tourist activity club activities and others

It is a reasonable to say that TV watching and web searching by chance in some cases give more impression for people than reading books especially poor peoples and hard workers in different citizen classes. The main readers of the big libraries in each province are pupils and students, researchers in different subjects but not so more ordinary ones.

### **The different requirement of books from different citizen classes**

One of expectation of the survey is that which kinds of books, the pupil and adult like best and it is very essential issues for making better development of library policy and other concerned reading culture one. We assume that reading culture

policy depends on current need of reader for books in different citizen classes to offer high quality book for them and to implement appropriate reading extension. We also recognize that pupil are the most educational targets for long term development of the country. It is a tendency that the pupil would like to read more books and magazines associated with knowledge that they learn from different disciplines at school. As can be seen in the table 2, there were 22 percents of pupil reading special book concerned to school subject. Their purposes of reading such books are not only for promoting extended knowledge but also for having better exam. It is clear that in free time, pupils would like to concentrate their minds on reading concerned subjects that they learn at school time for having their better scores of examinations at the end of each semester. On the other hand, about 70 percents of pupils derive from farmer's families and they are poor ones. They are aware that if they graduate with high score they will have good opportunity to be a university student and will find a job in the city later. By this tactic, they can change their lives from very hard village's circumstances. Last, in the campaign of reading activity, we conceive an interest response of citizen that pupils, students and their parents as well need more concerned books associated with knowledge that they gain at school, such as textbook and other concerned book or/and magazine for improvement their basic knowledge. While adults/non-pupil like to read more books and magazines regarded to history, culture, sport and others. It is true that student's parents play more important role pursuit their children to learn from book and magazine for gaining knowledge in different fields of live.

Table 2: The requirement of reading books of pupil, pupil's parent and non-pupil reader (adult)

Kind of books		Percentage %
Responses of pupil's readers		
1	Science introduction	19
2	Special book concerned to school subject	22
3	Old story book	11
4	Love story book	10
5	Spy story book	9
6	Others *	29
Responses of pupil's parents about reading activity of their children		
6	Old story book	28
7	Special book concerned to school subject	20
8	History book	11
9	Science introduction	9
10	Others**	32
Responses of non- pupil's readers (adults)		
11	Book of life manner in family	18
12	Politic and social book	16
13	Book of literature and art	22
14	Text book	10
15	Science introduction	12
16	Others***	22

\* Books consisted of contents of imaged story, spy story, love story, kung fu and famous person

\*\* Books comprised of contents of history, famous person, imaged story and kung fu

\*\*\*Books included contents of science and technology, pioneer sport and economy

The table 2 also indicates that adult would like to read book of book of literature and art, life manner in family, and politic and social books. The percentage of responses of such books was 22, 18 and 16 percents respectively. While there were 12 percents peoples liked to read the science introduction book.

The quality of book and magazine need more improvement both the content and the kind - diversity to meet reader's current need of different citizen classes in different locations for different reader ages. In some cases, it is true that some books and magazines are just satisfied for normal liking of the reader but not so engaging with their deep soul. This fact is a clue for our improvement of the reading culture's strategy to orient reader's manner to approach to better life with full meaning perfect ones. On the other concerned reason to support higher quality of book is that copyright law need to implement more effectively in practice.

### **The role of parents for stimulating book reading of their children**

Parents play very important power to motivate their children in reading book and it is one of special characteristics of book reading activity in our society.

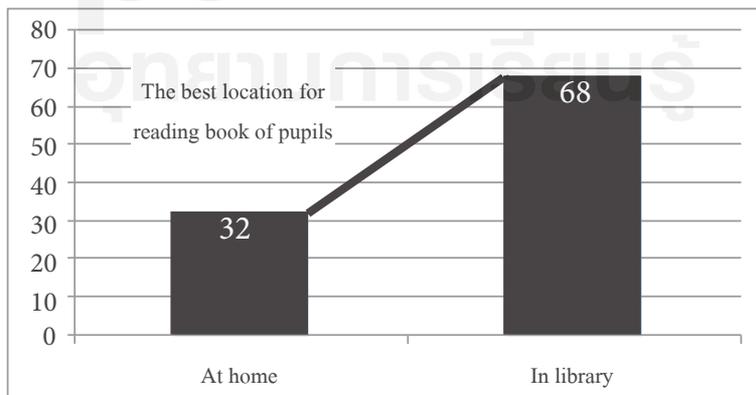
Table 3: The care about book reading of pupil from their parents

<b>Levels of interest</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Frequent interest	78
Do not care about	6
Sometime do care about	16

The table 3 shows that there were 78 percents of pupil's parents in frequent cared about book reading of their children. It is reasonable to say that parents would like to make more forces to their children to learn with the aim of having highest score if possible. In some cases, parents do not like their children to read a book concerned to other aspects of the life for extending their knowledge. Making much more pressure in learning school disciplines for honor from pupil's parent is mean that they usually give more psychological stress for their children. It seems that some pupils could not have their pioneer lives.

Concerning responses of pupil's parents about reading activity of their children, they confirm that their children were only 20 % in reading special book concerned to school disciplines (table 2). Such data was lower than responded from pupils themselves. The figure 1 indicated that there were 68 percents of pupil's parents would like their children to read books and magazines at the library and just 32 percents of them need their children to read book at home.

Figure 1: Response from pupil's parents about the best location for reading books of their children (%)



### Some aspects of the library service

The library service is also play more essential to stimulate reading activity in our society for better life of our citizen. Table 4 shows that there were 43 percent responses from readers that open time of library coincided class time.

Table 4: Responses from readers about quality of the library service

Issues		Reasons and/or sub-issues	Percentage %
1	Difficulty of finding books	Open time of library coincides class time	43
2		Do not know how to find a book in the library	27
3		Poor book resources in library	30
4	Methods to find a book in the library	Select from content bill	24
5		Shell-selection in bookcases	44
6		Catalogues	11
7		Select from list content in computer	21
8	Expectation of reader for better service from the library	Book diversity in the library	35
9		Daily open time of the library is longer	29
10		Good assistance from library officers	16
11		Need more guidelines for searching books	16
12		Other responses	4
13	Some suggestions from readers to make better services from the library	Increase the open time of the library	14
14		Offer more books and magazines to satisfy different kinds of the readers	32
		15	Book extension diversity in library service
14		Enhancing investment in buying books and magazines for district and commune libraries from local and central Governments	17
15		Call upon private donors or/and private library in supporting and servicing mini-library or and bookcase in the poor locations included given books and magazines, rooms for reading	16
		16	Other responses

It is most barriers for pupils to go to the library and we need to overcome the problem by adjusting library open time in right way. This table 4 also indicated that there were 30 percents of people to complain that poor book resources in the library.

### **The role of commune library for promoting reading activity of minority ethnic peoples**

It is true that the farmer and the handed worker classes in the country consist of 80 percent of Vietnamese population in total. The poorest farmer usually lives in upland region of the country. They face extremely difficult condition for the development of resource-related production due to complex topography and frequent natural calamities. In the case of minority ethnics, we assume that cultural barriers to discourage us from the task of introducing reading activity for such ones. There are 53 minorities in the country. The Government has been supporting much more money to help them for reduction of poverty by adopting appropriate technologies. However, generally, cultural barrier should overcome when people in minority communes are step by step to accessing with both local and international media and other rural development projects for reduction of poverty around such part of the country. Therefore, the development of book reading activity for promoting better life of such minorities is the first priority of our policy. On the other hand, it is clear that if you want to make your technology as a means of sustainable technology you had to engage your technology with indigenous knowledge of minority people and reading activity is powerful tool to open the way for adopting technology. So cultural barrier is a component of our thinking when we try to find out solutions for promoting reading activity in all remote areas of the country where minority people live.

Concerning to economic condition, their livelihoods depend on agriculture and forestry in the rural areas. They are a less-educated citizen and they could not make effort to buy a book or/and magazine for their daily reading. Thus, such classes are the main target group for promoting reading activity and establishing other policies concerned to making better development of reading culture for supporting their better lives in the way of approaching prosperous of the country.

The public library is popular in Vietnam especially in rural areas where poor farmers need more books for their reading in order to know about a development opportunity. During the time of survey, we also got some key responses from citizen about how to develop such library well. There were 32 and 14 percents of peoples raised their needs of supplying more kinds of books and magazines for consolidating public library and increasing more hours of opening such library respectively. There were 17 and 18 percents of citizens pressed their needs of sporting more facilities and developing more kinds of flexible services to match farmer's difficulty circumstances respectively. The fact raised from reading practice that public library model need more funding from the Government and NGOs to improvement of reading activity effective.

### **The reading culture campaign for making book activity proper in the year of 2010-2011**

To make reading culture proper is one of strategies of the Vietnamese Government for improvement of citizen's knowledge and other lived skills for their better lives. A reading culture campaign in all provinces of the country has been doing from 2010 up till now. The overall aim of this campaign stimulates citizen to recognize the role of reading culture for development of each person, commune and national. This activity is also in eradication of poverty in the poor rural commune and

better income for middle region and richer economy in some industrial zones. Through out the campaign, librarian, other governmental officers both local Government and Central one and the policy maker have got citizen's current requirement of book and magazine for their reading. And especially which kinds of book may math to each interest group from different citizen classes in different zones of the country.

Other main aim of the campaign has been done that we determine current status of library service systems in different provinces of the country and to establish appropriate solutions both short and long terms for development of library systems to offer an opportunity for people to go to library to read books especially in remote areas of the country. During the time of the campaign, there are many book reading festivals in Ha Noi capital and other cities in Vietnam. The event makes much more opportunity for brings readers, authors, publication houses and governmental officers together in dialoging and exchanging of ideas each other on their concerned read activity (Vu Duong Thuy Nga, 2011 a). Such sharing is useful not only for improvement of library service but also for getting more basic information and documents for providing essential issues to policy maker in order to establish new library's law engaging "Doi Moi" policy of the Government.

### **Appropriate solutions for enhancing book reading activity and library service**

According to the Vietnamese Government policy now, there are more attentions, which should be directed toward finding additional or alternative methods of making better use of reading culture a as key tool to provide knowledge and other labor skills to citizen (Vu Duong Thuy Nga, 2011 c). One of important approaches is to better matching the new reading culture policy to locally existing reading conditions.

We suggest some appropriate solutions are particularly followings:

(i) The development of book reading activity for promoting better life of citizen in Vietnam is recognized most important action of library system of the country and it need more support from the Government both local and central governments and NGOs as well. Therefore, it is necessary to have more appropriate policies to support reading activity and especially in scheming library service and developing library policy for matching available facility to human resource of librarian in order to supply more books and other concerned ones with higher quality to readers in different zones of the country.

(ii) To be aware the role of reading activity in all classes of Vietnamese citizen for promoting quality of life need to focus on public campaign of reading culture not short term aim but also long term run. Local governments in each province and the library department of Ministry of Culture – Sport – Tourism need to support to organize book reading festival annually.

(iii) To educate pupil and student the role of reading considers as a powerful tool for promoting their education and to offers more e-books and other media units to them not only in school but also in other public locations.

(iv) To enhance investment for library facility in all locations and improve quality of information service in different ways of media resources of the country is the first priority of our policy.

(v) To improve quality of book and magazine both content and kind diversity in all publishing in the country should be done for long term development of the reading culture.

(vi) To use informative high technology for delivering information more quick and convenient way is very necessary for the recent readers.

(vii) To encourage investors to establish private library to diversity such service in different zones of the country is one of the priority in our policy.

(ix) To join library system of the country to the global network and to develop international cooperation in all aspects of library service is one of our destinations of the library development.

### **Conclusions**

- The requirement of the Vietnamese citizen is high in terms of facilities such as of book and magazine both in quantity and quality and good library as well.

-Though the Government has been funding more money to consolidate and develop library system and reading activity to offer good condition for the citizen in different classes for reading books and magazines, much more efforts should be done in improvement of library system both facility and human resource of library service.

-To enhance book reading activity has been providing basic knowledge and essential skills of life for establishing new generation of Vietnamese and the reading culture activity has been supporting for new policy of development of Vietnam from the period of 2011 to 2020 to be come industrial country at the end of the stage.

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# **A Synthesis of Living library Knowledge in the Form of a Knowledge Park\***

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## **Abstract**

This research has the objectives of studying the experience of managing the living library and synthesizing the knowledge of TK park living library. The main sources of information are documents and relevant persons, selected by purposive sampling from one hundred and two persons related to the TK park. These were five founders and executive committee members, ten administrators at different levels, fifteen professionals from all four sections of TK park; ten librarians and interested people who were academically involved with TK park, fifty users/attendees of TK park academic activities and twelve living library network members. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus groups. Research instruments were document analysis, interview questionnaires and focus group question guidelines. Data were analyzed qualitatively and presented descriptively.

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\* Thai Knowledge Park and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University 2011

Findings showed that the TK park idea was initiated to find clear answers to an important national problem concerning reading, books and libraries at the national, local and individual worker levels in order to join in solving the problem of Thai society, in both academic and social aspects, by joining together to create a learning society with a national policy as a directing tool and sincere support for carrying out the duty of “full link” or “social link” to do the missing work. From its implementation as “the big experiment”, the TK park played the role of the organization building wisdom in Thai society; in terms of creating knowledge, transferring knowledge, exchanging knowledge, and promoting reading and learning through four basic activities: reading and learning promotion, art and cultural promotion, life skills promotion and learning promotion to enhance information technology skills.

The Living library revitalizes libraries with a focus on “newness and modernity”, “beauty”, “enjoyment”, “diversity”, “mobility”, and “convenience”. The success of the living library came from the integration of knowledge of a new approach to management which covered strategic management, participatory management, collaboration and networking, project management, problem management, communications and public relations, marketing, information technology and communication using the potential of sources of knowledge and expertise from external agencies, and monitoring and evaluation. The success came from basic power, i.e. the working team and the power of networks.

The success of the establishment and operation of TK park came from the crystallization of knowledge and experience of the working team, networks and other stakeholders, both theoretical and practical, on a basis of integration of interdisciplinary knowledge applied to the living library prototype which acted as a library, learning center, and arts and cultural center. It had three major components: the physical aspect, content and activities, and management. TK park living library has been an innovative library providing services to people for lifelong learning with a user-centered strategy in the context of Thai society both in the holistic and other

aspects, comprising the innovative library products, the innovative library process and the innovative library management. This led to innovative learning through the library for lifelong learning and created big changes to the image of the library and a competitive advantage.

TK park living library had an obvious impact on Thai society especially in developing a reading habit among the young generation, and creating critical readers and creative persons and doers. It inspired and created awareness about the living library, became a place for study, teaching and training and was also the subject of research and creative styles of learning development. As a prototype, the TK park living library can be used to develop libraries as a resource for lifelong learning for Thai people and as a co-creative force towards a learning society.

**Keywords:** TK park; Living library

### **Background and Importance of the Research**

The Thailand Knowledge Park (TK park) was established as a lifelong learning center focusing on instilling and supporting the reading habit and knowledge acquisition by various skills. Its main missions were to provide library services in the form of a learning park, and to manage, disseminate and transfer knowledge. Besides providing creative and modern “living library” services since early 2005, TK park was also intended as a Research and Development (R&D) center for living library, due to its strengths, especially the service section that could be a research and study area where ideas could be tested through action and the body of knowledge of the living library that has been created, accumulated and continuously developed. This resulted in adjustments to the way of thinking, the management process, and other activities within the organization, such as human resource development towards a common direction. Experiments were conducted to find activity guidelines, a man

agement prototype, and knowledge management linked to the reading and learning promotion process. The aim was for such knowledge from the prototype process to be disseminated as guidelines for other libraries and learning centers wishing to improve themselves.

The research and development of TK park living library Knowledge Project was therefore necessary in order to systematically externalize the experience in various aspects of living library management – physical aspects, content and activities and so on. People involved in the founding of TK park, executives and practitioners took part in this research and development process, creating knowledge of the living library in the form of a learning park, which could be transferred, disseminated, and published as handbooks for other libraries and various organizations. It also could lead to the research and development of a standard and indicators for TK park living libraries and also help develop TK park as an organization of wisdom in the Thai society, and play a creative learning role for Thai society to become truly a reading and learning society

### **Research Objectives**

1. To study and disseminate the experience of living library management.
2. To synthesize the knowledge of a living library in the form of a learning park.

### **Expected Outcomes**

1. The body of knowledge from synthesizing experiences and knowledge management through systematic research of the prototype learning park management and operations which leads to the development of living library standards and indicators in a context appropriate to Thai society.
2. The knowledge from this synthesis is disseminated and extended to other libraries and applied as a model for developing living libraries or self-learning sources resulting

in the promotion of reading, a change of attitude in reading behaviour, learning and library use by different groups in each area in order to create a learning society.

### **Limitations of Research**

1. The synthesis of knowledge on the TK park living library in this research was based on data collected by interviews and focus group discussions of those involved with TK park as founders, executive committee members, managers, division heads, librarians, professionals, and practitioners, together with those involved with TK park academically and as service users, visitors, and participants in TK park activities. The research found that differences in background, especially in education, job positions, roles and experiences as well as the period of time involved with to TK park, led to some differences in their perceptions, understanding and opinions. The researchers attempted a synthesis within the basic conceptual framework.

2. The synthesis of knowledge on the TK park living library in this research used documents produced by TK park as a database to verify and synthesize the knowledge with information gathered from externalization of the experience. This was because these TK park documents were regarded as primary sources and widely distributed officially. These comprised annual reports and especially handbooks based on the working experience of practitioners. However, so few related research was found that it was not possible to create a body of knowledge from these research works. This is necessary since in any branch of science the creation or development of a new theory must be based on previous research (Hunter 1982: 12). In synthesizing this body of knowledge, the researchers used a systematic process.

## Research Methodology

This research used documentary research, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in order to externalize the experience of managing the living library. Data were analyzed, classified and presented in descriptive form.

### Population and Sample

**1. Primary sources** consisted of six groups of people:

**Group 1** 5 founders, policy-makers , and executive committee members.

**Group 2** 10 TK park administrators at different administrative levels.

**Group 3** 15 librarians and professionals working at all four TK park sections.

**Group 4** 10 other librarians and outside persons academically involved with TK park such as activity participants, trainees, Living library Award contestants and winners, and researchers on TK park.

**Group 5** 50 users/participants in TK park academic activities in Bangkok and study visitors.

**Group 6** 12 living library network members, including those from the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education, the National Library of Thailand, the Office of the Basic Education Commission, and regional activity participation network members.

**2. Sample** 102 persons involved with TK park, selected purposively by the researchers .

### Research Instruments

Research instruments were a content analysis form, and interview and focus group question guidelines.

**Set 1. A content analysis form** to record and analyze data from documents and research, covering ideas, theories and principles related to the TK park

living library, etc.

**Set 2. Interview guidelines for founders and policy-makers** covering the origins, concepts and perspectives related to living libraries and the vision, mission, policies, and opinions of high-ranking TK park administrators, approaches to developing the living library in the form of a Learning Park, expected prototype, etc.

**Set 3. Interview guidelines for TK park executives** covering TK park management, planning, operation strategy, human resource development, public relations, approaches and guidelines for development of the living library in the form of a Learning Park, etc.

**Set 4. Focus group discussion guidelines for TK park personnel** covering knowledge and understanding of living library operations knowledge management, planning, participation, information dissemination and public relations, approaches to development of the TK park living library , problems and obstacles, etc., approaches to self development in respect to thinking, point of view, problems and obstacles.

**Set 5. Focus group discussion guidelines for librarians participating in training and living library contests**, covering their knowledge, understanding and experience of the living library.

**Set 6. Focus group discussion guidelines for library users and participants in TK park activities**, covering satisfaction, interest in using services, access to information, knowledge and understanding about living libraries following the TK park concept, other concepts and suggestions, etc.

**Set 7. Focus group discussion guidelines with the living library network** covering cooperation, satisfaction, viewpoint, activities, network membership size, public relations, approaches to network development, problems and obstacles, and appropriate models, etc.

The research instruments were verified for content validity by five experts before being used for data collection.

## Data Collection

1. Review of literature and related research about TK park. The researchers studied publications produced and disseminated by TK park, such as annual reports, handbooks and the results of other literature and research related to TK park as well as news and articles from newspapers and magazines.

2. Interviews and focus group discussions with key informants identified with the cooperation of TK park.

3. Analysis and synthesis of the information gained from literature review and related research, externalization of experience from the interviews and focus group discussions with key informants.

4. Presentation of the first draft of the result of the synthesis of knowledge of the TK park living library to a meeting of TK park administrators and related experts and adjustments according to the opinions and recommendations from the meeting.

## Data Analysis

The literature and qualitative data were analyzed, classified and presented descriptively along with charts/diagrams as necessary.

## Research Summary

The findings of the research synthesis were as follows:

1. TK park concept was initiated to solve important national problems of reading, books and libraries at the national, local and individual level. This was to solve both academic and social aspects of the problem of Thai society. The co-creation of learning society, with national policy providing the direction, received

strong support, serving as the “missing link” or “social link” in Thai society towards the prototype of a TK park living library. This sparked the idea and inspiration which led to the creation of a conceptual outline and the implementation of a TK park living library systematically.

2. The clear definition of the role and mission of TK park was important for the direction of the TK park management regarding TK park living library, among the roles of those who create the inspiration, the attitude and the desire to read, to think and to learn, of stimulators or mediators who create activities and learning behavior, also as a prototype source of study, a creative learning model, a living library prototype, and as trainers of practitioners or administrators of living libraries.

3. TK park played an important role as a building wisdom organization in the Thai society in terms of creating knowledge, transferring and disseminating knowledge, extending knowledge, ideas and imagination and promoting reading and learning.

**Knowledge Creation:** TK park created knowledge through research and providing a space for organizing academic activities. Knowledge creation could be classified in two kinds; knowledge creation from research and knowledge creation from academic activities.

**Knowledge Transfer:** TK park transferred knowledge with clear target groups through four main activities: reading and learning promotion activities, art and culture promotion activities, life skills promotion activities and learning activities to enhance information technology skills.

**Extension of Knowledge, Ideas and Imagination:** TK park emphasized the concept of “creative leaning” and the extension of knowledge, ideas and imagination through up-to-date technology. As a “library for learning” and “learning forum”, it is an alternative for learning to strengthen the wisdom of Thai society by integrating informal learning with formal and non-formal learning to develop the knowledge-

seeking habit and lifelong learning. Knowledge and ideas can be extended in various ways such as extending local wisdom by modern technology, extending knowledge by research and disseminating the body of knowledge which was developed or stored as a knowledge asset, extending and applying the results, and adding value especially to management, development and policy making.

**Reading and Learning Promotion:** The important objective of reading and learning promotion was to motivate, to inspire and to stimulate learning among the activity participants so as to create the need to seek knowledge, do in-depth research by themselves, extend the experience obtained from participating in the activity, and find related books and learning materials that the library has selected to meet library users' interests. TK park also produced learning materials in the format of electronic books or multimedia materials to stimulate people's interest and gathered them together as a depository of knowledge. Activities were systematically planned by emphasizing the correlation to festivals in the calendar year, and the country's and important national and world events, so that children and youth could discover their dreams, ability, true potential and value. The characteristics and principles were to use activities to lead to good books, reading and learning as a basic goal through network partnerships in both public and private sectors as well as high-profile persons who co-operated and participated in organizing activities and sharing knowledge from reading good books and instilling creativity among children and members of the public using the service, in order to create readers, thinkers, inventors for the Thai learning society.

4. The living library revitalized libraries with a focus on "newness and modernity," "beauty," "enjoyment", "diversity", "mobility" and "convenience". The success of the living library came from the integration of knowledge about new management which covered participatory management, collaboration and networking, project management, problem management, communications and public

relations, marketing, information technology and communication application, using potential sources of knowledge and experts from external agencies, and monitoring and evaluation. Success came from the crystallization of knowledge and experience of the working team, networks and other stakeholders, both theoretical and practical, on a basis of integration of interdisciplinary knowledge applied to the living library prototype which acted as a library, learning center, and arts and cultural center.

5. The TK park living library resulted from the crystallization of academic theories and professional practices had three major components: the physical aspect, content and activities, and management. The TK park living library was an innovative library, providing services to people for lifelong learning using a user-centered strategy in the context of Thai society. Other aspects included innovative library products comprising a variety of content, form, presentations, activities and services; innovative library processes with new concepts, techniques, methods and processes to revitalize libraries and move the living library forwards, blurring the distinction between a library, an art and cultural center and a learning center; and innovative living library management resulting from inventions, experiments, and adjustments to the library format and image, all of which was based on new management and driven by cooperation among public, private, and people sectors as well as international organizations and experts. This led to innovative learning through the library for lifelong learning, learning management presenting a learning process through practical experience and lifestyle and the presentation of books in integrated activities.

TK park living library made great changes to the image of the library and was a prototype model of a living library providing services to people in Thai society. It had an impact on public library administration and operations and created a movement for change and awareness in the library profession, reading and learning through a living library in a knowledge-based society.

Figure 1: The driving force of the Thailand Knowledge Park and living library in the form of a Learning Park

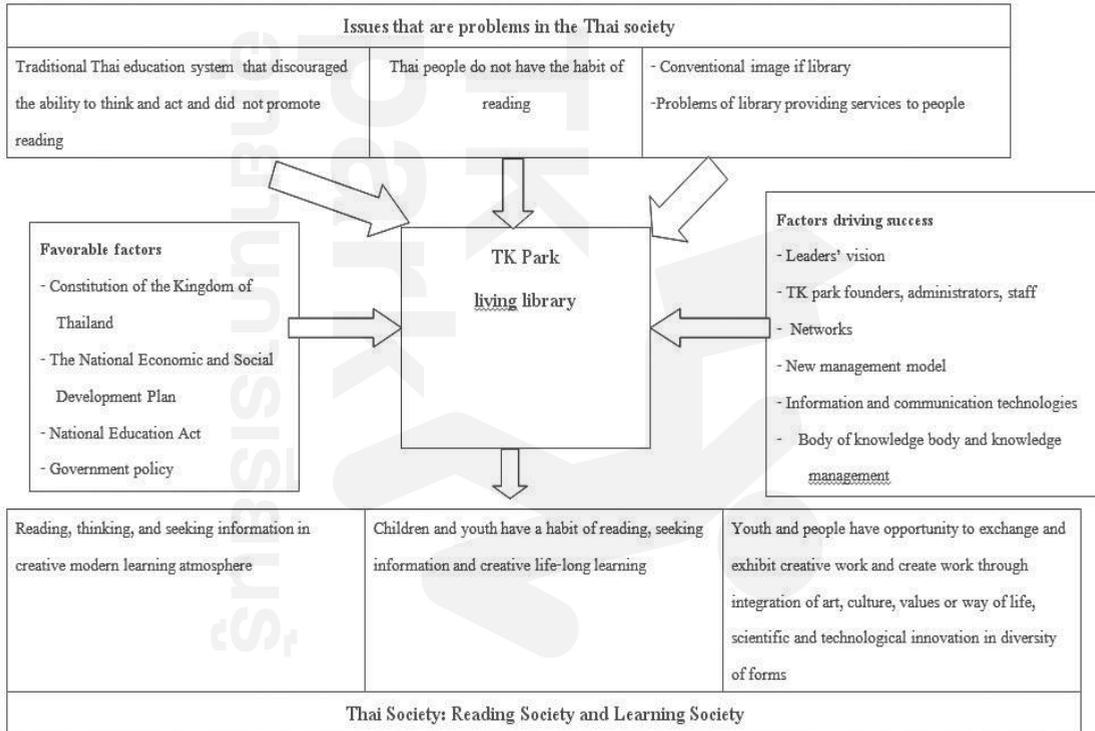


Figure 1: The driving force of TK park living library

Figure 2: The Acquisition of Management and Administration Concepts of the living library

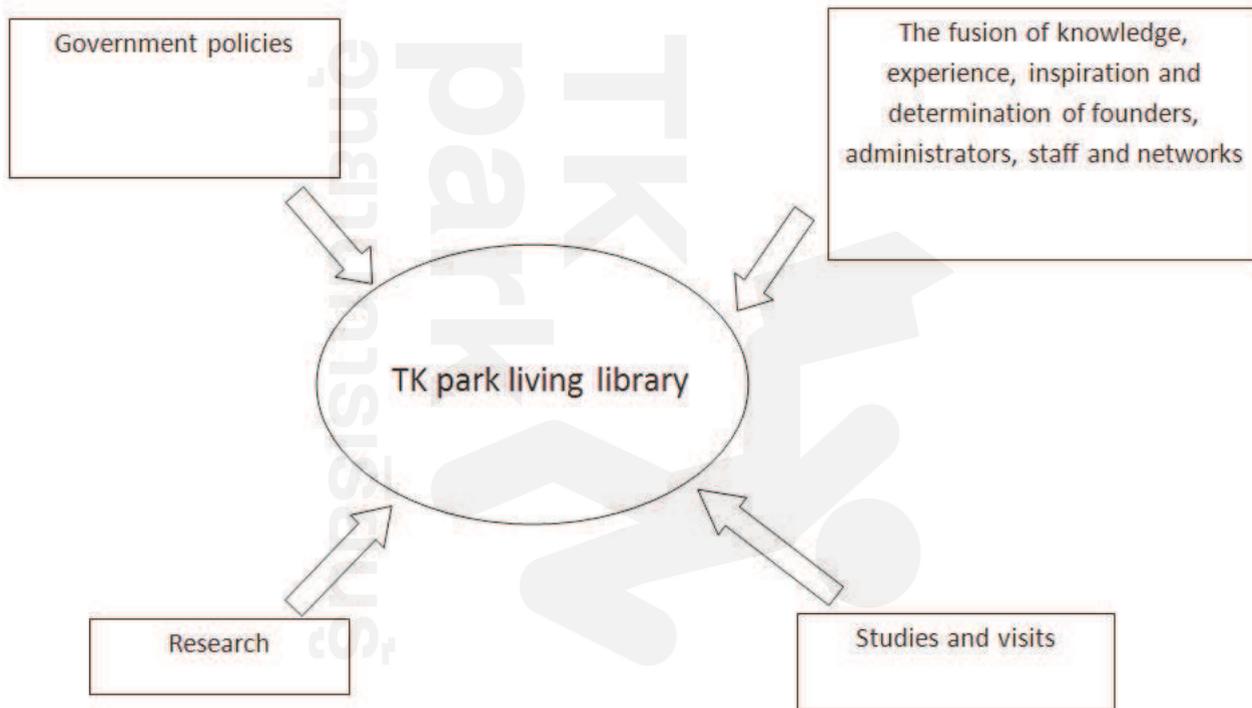


Figure 2: The Acquisition of TK park living library management concept

Figure 3: Organization Creating Wisdom in Society

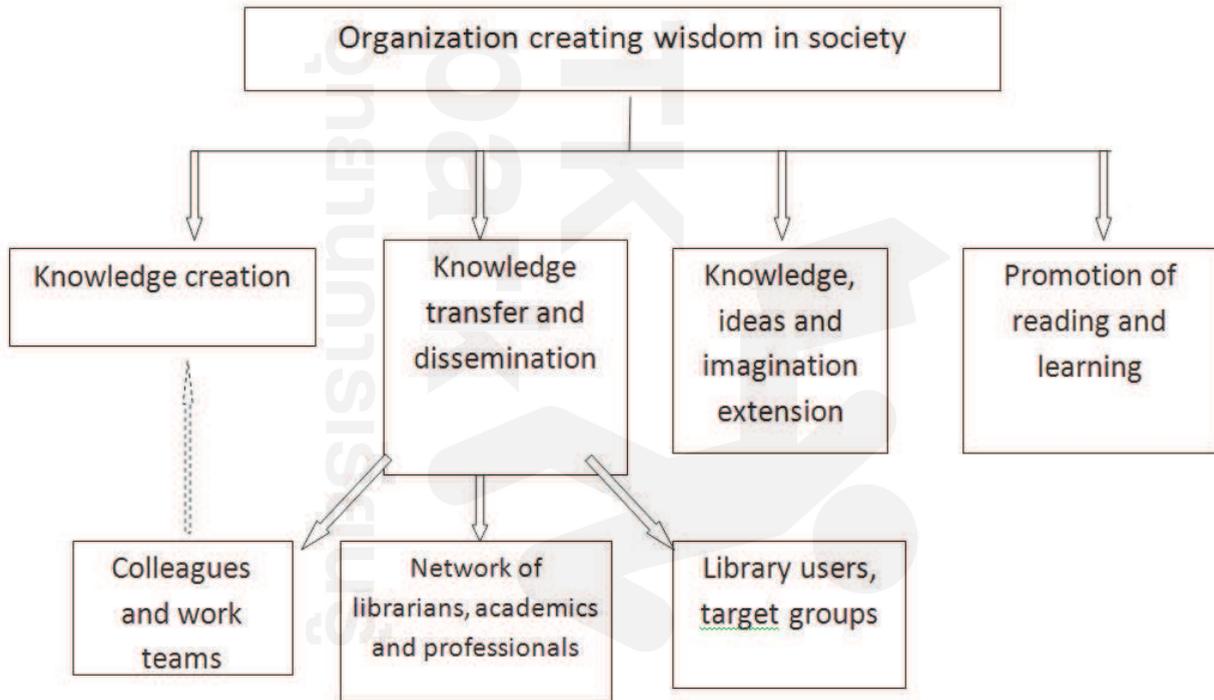


Figure 3: Organization Creating Wisdom in Society

Figure 4: Library Revitalization

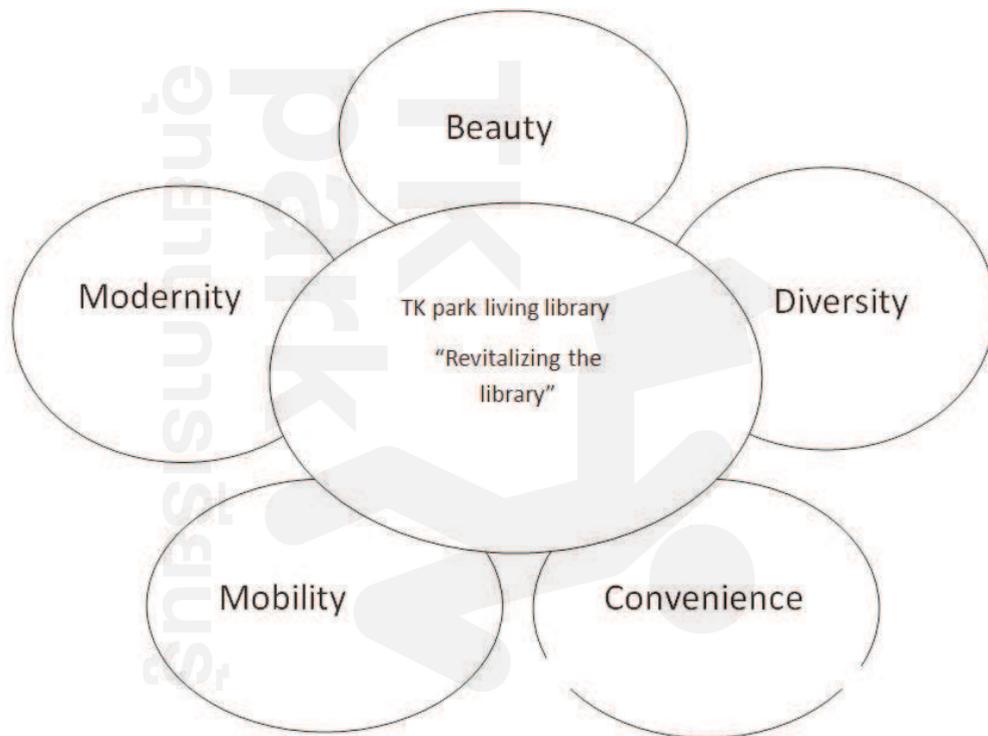
Figure 4: Living library Revitalization

Figure 5: Conceptual Framework for living library Development

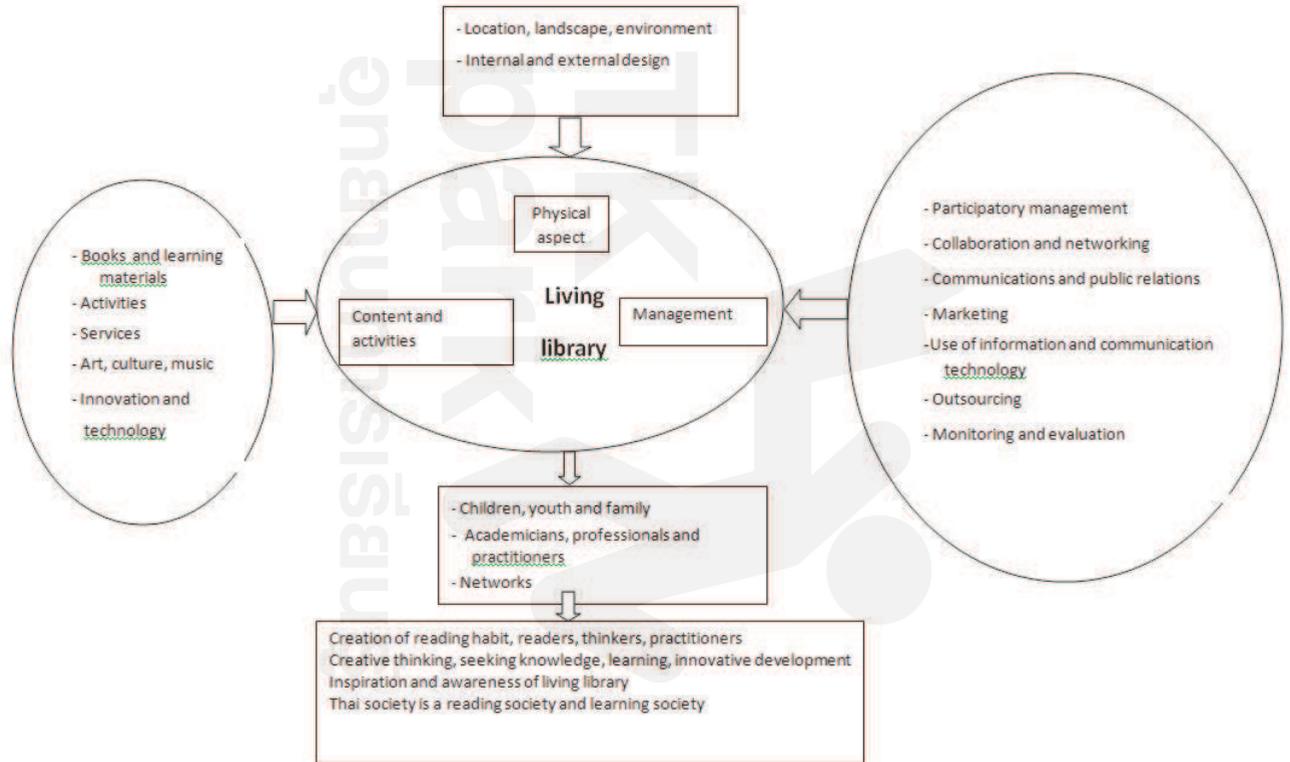


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework for TK park living library Development

Diagram 6: The Innovative living library in the form of a Learning Park

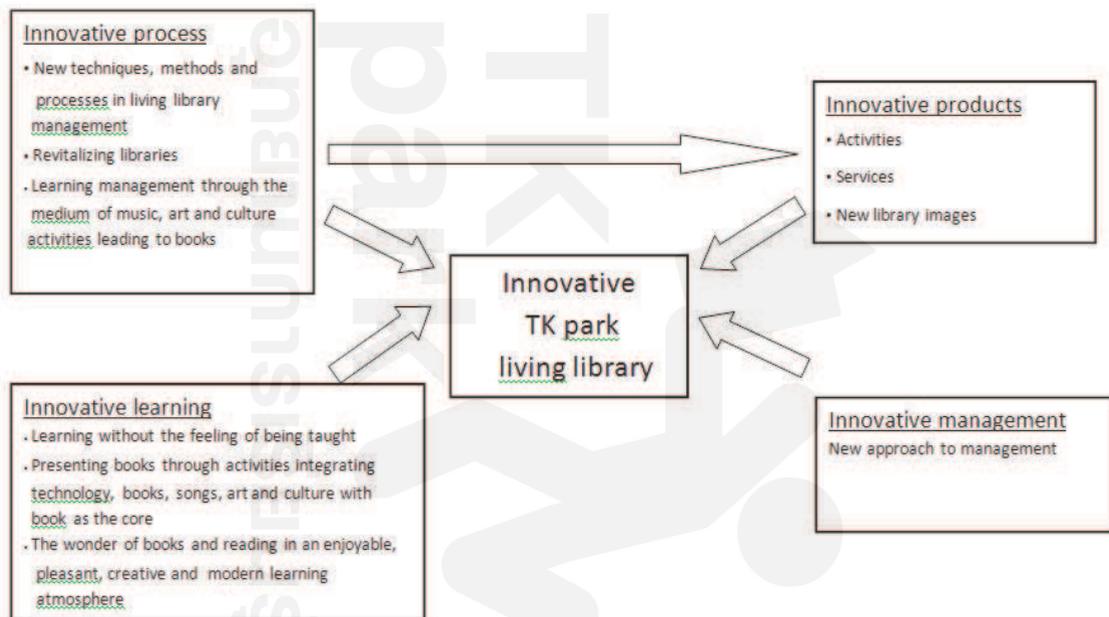


Diagram 6: The Innovative TK park living library

## Discussion

1. The vision and operational direction of the living library was in line with the research results of Kandeck (2008) on trends in public library development in knowledge-based society in 2017. It was found that libraries in Thailand and other countries had the vision of becoming lifelong learning centres and creating a learning society and set the management direction to respond to people's needs in a variety of ways. The research found that public libraries emphasized the application of information technology to library work, providing services equitably and thoroughly, and conducted various activities to promote learning. In the future, such learning centres would be available in all areas and function as centred for knowledge exchange and lifelong learning. These research results also showed that the TK park living library, which was developed from the establishment of the TK park in 2004, had the concept, vision, principles and model to make it a "prototype model" and a "leading organization" of libraries which served the people and responded to changes towards becoming a learning society in the future.

2. The TK park living library was a model for the development of living libraries which gave importance to user-centred management, had a framework and process in line with the student-centred learning management. This was in line with the synthesis of research by Chareonwongsak et al. (2005), which found that the process of student-centred development emphasized the process of thinking and real action in line with the skills and interests of the learners and was a process emphasizing that the learners gained pleasure and knowledge appropriate to the level of education and can bring to creative use. The desirable characteristics of the learners were being good persons, clever persons and happy persons. The principles of learning management which focused on the importance of the learners were to manage learning so that the learners gained maximum benefits, developed their full potentials, had the information seeking skills from a variety of learning resources, and could apply learning methods in real life. All parties played important roles to develop learners,

create opportunities for learners to participate in learning management under democratic principles, so that students had learned happily and meaningfully and be able to create knowledge by themselves. Basic education was provided in various forms and the key techniques of learning management emphasized learning from learning sources, learning by action, learning through thinking processes and technology-based learning.

3. The TK park living library was the prototype for living library development in the integrated various dimensions: the integration of library, art and cultural centre, and learning centre, which also gave importance to learning promotion in an active and lively atmosphere; the integration of new knowledge and local wisdom; the integration of books, music, films and activities that can strongly promote the power of imagination; the integration and development of learning skills linking between science, art and culture, and technology. This led to a link between science and arts, old knowledge and new or future knowledge, and traditional technology or local wisdom and new technology, as well as helping to extend traditional wisdom using modern technologies. With an emphasis on instilling the love of reading and learning in the role of creating inspiration, attitude, the desire to read, think and learn and serving as the stimulator or mediator who creates action and learning behaviour, imagination and creativity, with books as the core and through the perspective of experts in various fields, applying the concept of integrated learning to create well-rounded learning, linking knowledge, ideas, experience and imagination holistically and practically.

4. The TK park living library was the prototype for developing living libraries using an interdisciplinary body of knowledge, including education, psychology, behavioural science, library and information science, communications and public relations, marketing, information and communication technology, arts, music, recreation, health, etc., creating an image of a library that serves the public in a new way which used a variety of different perspectives in line with development of the

library and information sciences profession, which is interdisciplinary, related to various fields of study such as library science, information and communication technology, psychology, management, communications, education, mathematics, logic, linguistics, law, public policy, etc. (Chaudhry c1988: 189; Hawkins 2009: 44-53; Otten and DeBons 1970: 37)

5. The TK park living library was the prototype for developing living libraries as lifelong learning centres for youth, operating with an emphasis on linking the issues of reading, books and libraries to the way of life in a systematic and comprehensive way, in line with the results of the synthesis of research of the characteristics and processes of instilling the virtues and morals of 10 different countries by Jongsathityu and Sukhaphirom (2007), which found that instilling virtues and morals must be a continuous, long-term process that linked to lifestyle. It could be achieved by teaching and learning through a process of activities related to real life and the actual environment, situation and surrounding conditions through teaching thinking, analysis, reasoning, accepting differences and respecting the rights of others. Participation by acting or supporting other sectors in society through a variety of forms and mechanisms was a good start. This was in line with the opinion expressed by Rak Luk Group Co., Ltd (2010: 11-12), "... the promotion of a love of reading among teenagers by building a library that attracts their interest, or what we try to call a "living library" may not be sufficient to drive a strategy of reading promotion to success. However to convince all adults continuously to read books and learn to create new knowledge by themselves would turn reading into a regular daily habit and learning into a necessity for a happy life for everyone in society. This regular practice will become a model for children to follow and, when combined with other existing measures, it should help improve the context for solving the problem ... that Thai people disliking reading. The problem must be seen through, viewed clearly and linked to reality in order to be solved."

6. Overall, although the concept, theory and principles of the TK park living library was not new among information professionals in developed countries where library services have been an important basic good provided by governments for the quality of life of their people, in the context of Thai society where library services to the people remained as before, and had various limitations and obstacles, together with the fundamental problems of Thai people's reading habits, the TK park living library in which resulted from the crystallization of academic theories and professional practices had created interesting changes, and was regarded as an innovative library service for people in the context of the Thai society providing lifelong learning through a user-centred strategy both holistically and specifically. It created changes to the image of libraries and has components for a prototype model for public libraries in Thai society. This is in line with the research results of Traitha wonsap (2006) who studied the learning park structure project for the new generation. The analysis of TK park as a case study found that the allocation of space gave a feeling of smooth non-stop flow, and the attractive decoration of the space invited people to experience the place, activities, and modern technology inserted into every part of the project. The rotation of activities at the park's "San Fun" plaza created diversity and attracted target groups with different interests. The learning park as a contemporary learning centre changed society's attitude and viewpoint towards traditional libraries, which only provided knowledge through books in an official atmosphere, to one that regarded libraries as places to seek knowledge joyfully, with a relaxing atmosphere for reading and space to do creative activities where people could come at their leisure. In terms of design, the atmosphere of library and activity plaza was recognized as an important place to promote learning and reflected the concept of "Nature and Movement", making the library a place for reading books in a varied relaxing atmosphere with a natural atmosphere, books and other activities promoting reading interspersed in the space. From a perspective of both inside and outside the project, it was possible to learn about the activities taking place without disturbing reading.

*Innovative Library Products.* TK park products comprised various media including books, electronics media, technologies, music, art and culture and proactive, creative and modern activities and services, which responded to the needs of users.

*Innovative Library Processes.* New concepts, techniques, methods and processes to revitalize libraries and living library management propelled living libraries forwards to erase the distinctions between library, art and culture centre, and learning centre, between reading and participating in various activities, between urban and rural, and between “Thainess” and universality.

*Innovative Living library Management.* The TK park living library resulted from research, experiments and changes in the form and basic image of libraries, all of which were based on new management with clear objectives, a strategic framework, vision, mission, goals and target groups. Using technology in developing networks and disseminating knowledge, management emphasized participation and moved forwards by creating partners among the public, private, and academic sectors comprising academics, thinkers and researchers with an interest in learning, civil society and international organizations while also making use of the potential knowledge outside sources and experts. This had an effective impact on library management and processes to serve people in the learning society and significantly changed the image of the library while also promoting its competitive advantage.

Overall, it led to innovative learning in the dimension of a library for lifelong learning and learning management presented a learning process through practical experience and lifestyle, so that learners did not feel that they were being taught, and presented books through the medium of activities which integrate technology, books, songs, art and culture, with books as the core and an emphasis on the systematic and comprehensive link between books, reading, and libraries to lifestyle. This provided children and youth with the opportunities to seek knowledge and develop their thinking, ability, intellect, personality and minds. They experienced the wonder

of books, reading and learning in a fun, pleasant, creative atmosphere through an up-to-date quality system of learning which responds to the inspiration and needs of children and youth in self-development. The model and culture of accessing knowledge and method and process of learning of youth/ target groups was changed in the dimension of libraries which created the feeling that library users are up-to-date. The operation of living libraries also created a culture of a new way of working, participatory learning, learning on the job, exchanges of learning, and extension and dissemination of knowledge among service providers, individuals and related parties from every sector of society.

The TK park living library had three major components: physical form, content and activities, and management. It has been copied and disseminated in many forms as the site for study visits, training, exhibitions of the works of students, teachers, librarians and interested persons and the topic of research. It has gained the confidence of related agencies in human resource development and the development of living libraries in order to extend the concept and body of knowledge about TK park living library management to be applied in establishing living libraries to serve people in all sectors of society with results and effects on society and creating a learning society, the mass media and related research (Dindam 2007; Sacchanand and Prommapan 2010). From a study of the literature and research related to living libraries, it was found that there was research using the expressions “living library” for university libraries, public libraries and school libraries and there was an interest in developing the living library since 2006 when TK park living library concept was established, there were more researches on living library such as Phaosiri (2003), Phahomsuk (2004), Sithongsook et al (2004), Suksaen (2004), Worakun et al (2004), Dangkong (2004), Wangkhamklang (2004), Nakyoo (2005), Khanthong et al (2005), Pleumpradit (2005), Saengsawang (2006) and Phumkhonsan (2008).

## Recommendations

1. The body of knowledge of TK park living library should be extended widely in the learning society, where reading is regarded as an important government policy and a national agenda item. In addition, the recommendations for the Second Decade of National Education Reform (2009-2018) by the Office of the Secretary-General of the Education Council (2010) specified four key points in the educational and learning system that needed urgent reform, including issues related directly to living libraries. These were the development of the quality of Thai people and the quality of educational institutions and learning sources in the new era. One basic measure that specified a campaign for Thai people to love reading as a national agenda item and an important measure was the development of community libraries throughout the country in the form of living libraries. TK park should use this measure as an opportunity to expand its body of knowledge widely and sustainably.

2. The body of knowledge of TK park living library may change according to the social, economic, and political context and environment, especially as a result of progress in information and communication technology, especially the Internet which has a great impact on people's way of life and behaviour, especially the learning psychology and the psychology of reading together with learning materials. The ongoing development of the body of knowledge of living libraries appropriate to the context of community libraries is therefore necessary together with TK park human resource development to create the ability to lead, to produce creative works, to be a prototype, moving TK park towards a centre of living library research and development at a national and international level.

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**Paper: Libraries for Life: The Singapore National Library Board Experience**

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**Paper: Reading Habits of Thai people in a Cultural Dimension**

Professor Nidhi Eoseewong is a renowned Thai historian, social thinker and writer. From 1976 to the present, Nidhi has published over 2,000 books and articles for newspapers and magazines. His outstanding work includes “Pen & Sail”, a collection of articles in which he tried to use the literary works of the past to explain the changes in Thai society.

Nidhi’s influential works have brought him wide recognition at home and abroad. He won the academic prize at the 10th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prizes in 1999, and Thailand’s prestigious Sri Burapa Award in 2002 for his work that has had influence in many fields including history, literature and media.

He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in History from Chulalongkorn University, and his doctoral degree at the University of Michigan, USA. The professor retired from teaching history at Chiang Mai University in 2000. He continues writing and linking stories of the past to explain current society.

**Ms. Somphet Phongphachanh**

**Country Director, Room to Read Lao**

**Paper: Reading Promotion and Library in Lao PDR**

Somphet launched Room to Read into Lao PDR in 2005 after spending seven years as coordinator with the Association for Sending Picture Books to Lao Children (ASPB), a Japanese non-governmental organization. She is committed to increasing educational opportunities for children in her country and in 1997 decided to leave a career as an

anesthesiologist at Mahosot Hospital in Vientiane to dedicate her career full-time to nonprofit work.

Somphet received a BA in Medicine from Thai Binh University of Medicine in Vietnam, and a BA in Arts (English Language) from Dong Dok University in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

**Ms. Sook Hyeun LEE,**

**Director General, National Library for Children and Young Adults (NLCY)**

**Paper: Korean National Strategy for Library Development and Reading Promotion for Children and Young Adults**

Ms. Sook Hyeun Lee has been very active for many years in the area of library policy making and services. She has worked at the National Library of Korea (NLK) since 1979 and currently she is the Director General of the National Library for Children and Young Adults (NLCY) under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

She has been active in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). She served as a member of standing committee on Acquisition and Collection Section and has been a member of Literacy and Reading Section. She has contributed various articles to library journals and newspapers focusing on reading education and literacy and actively participated in international meetings and conferences on library and information services.

She launched library outreach programs for underprivileged children and families from multicultural backgrounds. In close cooperation with public libraries and school libraries, she raised the importance of children's reading and encouraged more children to read more, enabling children to foster their dreams and hopes at the library. She received an M.A. in Library and Information Science from Yonsei University.

**Assoc. Prof. Setiono Sugiharto**

**Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta, Indonesia**

**Paper: The Myth of Illiterate Culture: the Case of Indonesian Children**

Assoc. Prof. Setiono Sugiharto teaches at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Atma Jaya Catholic University, Republic of Indonesia. He is also a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics at the university. Sugiharto has won many awards from academic institutions including the Ministry of National Education.

Sugiharto is a prolific writer whose works explore national and international educational issues. He has been a contributor to The Jakarta Post since 1998. His published articles include Access vs. Book Reading Habit; Teaching Literature is an Art that Can, Must be Learned; Exploding the Myth of Non-Literate Culture.

**Ms. Vu Duong Thuy Nga,**

**Deputy Director of the Department of Libraries,**

**Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Vietnam (MOCST)**

**Paper: The Development of Book Reading Activities to Promote a Better Life for Citizens in Vietnam**

Ms. Vu Duong Thuy Nga has a BA and MA in Library Science from Hanoi Cultural University and is a PhD candidate at the University. She has served in the Library Department of the Cultural Information Ministry since 1986.

Nga has conducted many research projects relating to reading habits in Vietnam. Her remarks at the recent Conference on the real situation and solutions to developing a reading culture in Vietnam were widely published in the local and international media. Nga noted that an important reason for the unpopularity of reading is the failure of schools and universities to make it a central element of learning. The average number of books per person at public libraries is low. High-school students go

to their school library just once a week on average because of a shortage of librarians and the small size of libraries. There are also not enough quality books and magazines in libraries, especially in rural and mountainous areas. Most ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and rural residents still lack easy access to books, newspapers, and magazines. Her publications include four textbooks (Library Science, Classification, Subject Indexing, Information Storage and Reference Tools) and 40 articles published in academic journals.

