

## **REINVENTING LIBRARY ASSOCIATION: INDONESIA'S EXPERIENCE AND PERSPECTIVES**

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### **Abstract**

Established in 1973, The Indonesian Library Association has contributed significantly for the development of professional librarian in Indonesia. It has branches in every province and serving million people every year. With robust network and solid organization, the association has regular annual meeting attended by almost thousands of its loyal members making it one of the largest professional organization In Indonesia. It is the only one formal library association in Indonesia dealing with librarians. Provoked by monetary crisis in Indonesia which melted down the fragile economic foundation and forced the longest served president, the late Soeharto to quit, Indonesia suddenly become a "new state" adopting democratic styled government, more open society And real free market. These unexpected changes have had tremendous impacts on many walks of life including professional institutions . Euphoria that followed reform movement has dispersed power concentration by the establishment of new political parties. Forty-eight new parties joined eligibly the first democratic general election in 1999. Reform spirits also intruded to The Indonesian Library Association (ILA) locally known as Ikatan Pustakawan Indonesia (IPI). It faced highly demanding members who wanted some substantial changes in the organization structure and custodians and the implementation of power sharing favoring

the association branches and chapters in the provinces and districts. Up to the present the top position of the association traditionally goes to the head of National Library. With his or her beauracratic style in leadership, some consider not suitable anymore for the new paradigm of modern and democratic organization. To compound the problems, some librarians have established four forums and one scholars association namely Public Library Forum, University Library Forum, School Library Forum, Special Library Forum and The Association of Indonesian Library and Information Scholars. They are autonomous semi formal entity. Judging this unfavorable condition, the board and management of ILA has taken some bold measurements by inviting some new faces, young librarians with strong commitment and high competency to participate actively and directly in decision making process in the association board meeting and put them in strategic position in the organizational structure. Moreover, the association has no objection in the implementation of power sharing making its branches and chapters more autonomous and creative as well. It also simplified its organizational structure to accommodate some changes in modern setting and globalization era. By reinventing its management style and streaming line the organization, the Association has managed to satisfy the majority of its members and attracting more new members especially the young professional librarians

#### **A. Introducing Indonesia**

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelagic state, comprising 17,508 islands. Having around 237 million people, places it the world's fourth most populous country after China, India and United State of America. The nation's capital city is Jakarta.

Since the seventh century the Indonesian archipelago has played an important role in trading activities in the region especially with China and India. Much of their cultural, religious and political models have influenced the nowadays Indonesian establishments.

After three and a half centuries of foreign occupations, Indonesia, in 1945 declared its own independence. Indonesia consists of different ethnic, linguistic, and officially religious groups. It has developed a shared identity expressed in Bahasa Indonesia as official language. Rich in natural resources and rain forests, Indonesia gives valuable contributions for

reducing the impact of global warming.

As unitary state, power is in the hand of central government. The president of Indonesia is the head of state, army chief, and the director of domestic and foreign affairs. Following the fall of the longest served president in its history after independence, Soeharto, in 2004 people directly elected the president and vice president. The president may serve a maximum of two consecutive five-year terms.

Since the introduction of regional autonomy policy, Indonesia is like a federal state. It has 33 provinces, some of them established after the Reform Movement in 1998. Each province has its own political legislature and governor. The provinces are subdivided into regencies and cities which have become the key administrative units, responsible for providing most government services.

#### **B. The Indonesian Library Association**

In 1998 economic crisis hit Indonesia

leading to the fall of New Order Regime of Soeharto with its only three political parties and resulting in the birth of Reform Movement led by Amin Rais. The Movement eliminated autocratic styled regime and replaced it with democratic political system. This system has encouraged the establishment of several political parties

This political system inspired some non-government organizations, including the Indonesian Library Association (ILA) to adopt democratic-styled leadership. It encourages decentralization of the Association administration and decision process at provincial levels. This policy makes provincial broad of the Association autonomous and independent to set its own programs based on its own needs.

The Association also welcomes the establishment of new Library Forums and association such Indonesian Academic Library Forum and Indonesian Special Library Forum in the year of 2000, Indonesian Public Library Forum and Indonesian School Library Forum in the year of 2002 and The Association of Indonesian Library and Information Scholars in the year 2006.. It is hoped the four library forums and scholars association work hand in hand with the ILA for improving library services and profession which in turn will yield quality human resources in Indonesia.

Indonesian Library Association was established in 1973. The mission of the Association was to:

Accomodate the aspiration and creation of those working in libraries or those whose activities related to

information dissemination or librarianship

Build distinguished image of library profession in the society

Implement the library science for the benefit of education, science and people welfare

Lead library science development.

In the march of time and in its last congress, ILA redefined its mission focusing on the issue of professionalism of being a librarian. This happened as the consequences of people's strong demand on quality service of library and tight budget availability. Building image is no longer put as a priority program since people have given thumb up of the strategic role of librarians in improving their welfare through the dissemination of quality information and provision of dedicated services.

The Indonesian Library Association acknowledges serving a large country like Indonesia is not an easy job to do. It faces some serious challenges in term of poor quality of human resources, limited fund, and lack of beauracatic or official commitment. Strong commitment and dedication have been embedded in the profiles of ILA management. Frankly speaking it is difficult to allocate ample time for managing day-to day operation of ILA structured programs since the Association's members of board and staff also have tight schedule in leading and administrating activities of their organizations of origin.

Traditionally and for pragmatic reasons such as financial and facilities support, the chairmanship of the Association Central Board automatically goes to the head of Indonesian National Library. This de

facto convention has lasted since 1980 in which Martini Hardjoprakoso held this position. The Association secretariat is located in National Library Complex (at Jalan Merdeka Selatan 11 Jakarta Pusat). This condition has shaped beauracratic style of leadership in the association management where ranking position in command prevailed.

Many important programs of the Association were at stagnate state and worst were not materialized. It only managed regular programs namely annual meeting and congress. In these traditional gatherings some issues discussed. The Association statute and Code of Ethics were discussed and chairperson election held, in every three-year congress. From organization development perspectives, little things have been done by the Association board. The performance and achievement of the Association failed to satisfy its constituents, the librarians.

### **C. Planned Programs Ahead**

Judging this unfavorable condition, the board and management of Indonesian Library Association has taken some bold measurements by inviting some new faces, young librarians with strong commitment and high competency to participate actively and directly in decision making process in the Association board meeting and put them in strategic position in the organizational structure . Moreover, the association has no objection in the implementation of power sharing making its branches and chapters more autonomous and creative as well. It also simplified its organizational structure to accommodate some changes in modern setting and globalization era.

The Indonesian Library Association will promote excellence in libraries through the following actions:

1.Explore partnership opportunities with other nonprofit organizations that benefit libraries and fulfill a community need.

2.Raise awareness of library issues and services among Legislators and other officials who influence public policy that impacts libraries.

3.Distribute information on legislative issues to Association members in a timely manner.

4.Encourage Association members to participate in strategic national issues such as eradicating poverty program and supporting quality human resources development.

5.Support national library efforts in implementing the newly issued Library Act.

Send Association representatives to provincial library meetings.

1In the field of intellectual freedom, ILA has some dedicated programs aiming at

1.promoting broader access to information, ideas, and diverse perspectives for all

2.paying respect to the privacy of library users regarding their information seeking behavior and needs.

supporting the role of the library in fostering a democratic process of the establishment of Masyarakat Madaniah (Civic Society) in Indonesia

1Indonesia Library Association since its establishment has recognized that the quality and the quantity of Indonesian Human Resources depend very much on the availability of sustainable and continuing education.

It is the Association's strong commitment to

1. sponsoring an annual conference, planned seminar and great issues forum

2. conducting a sustainable and continuing education needs assessment

3. partnering with domestic and overseas library schools and other capable institutions to match trainers librarians' special needs

increasing membership awareness of the educational opportunities available to them to study library and information science

It is not of course an easy task to increase and retain membership. Some current members keep complaining about the use of their retribution and other financial resources and demanding accountability and transparency. To respond these issues, ILA takes the following strategy to increase and retain membership.

1. Invite library staff, library and information science students, trustees, friends, institutions, organizations, and allied professionals.

Increase the benefit and value of Association membership by identifying and responding to increasing and changing member needs.

1. Admittedly, the image of library profession in Indonesia is getting much better now than before the establishment of Indonesian Library Association in 1973. However, efforts to build the profession to have respected role in, and give valuable contribution to, the Indonesian society, are never ending job. Establishing new library communities and strengthening the current ones is the main focus of the never stopped-efforts of the Association. The efforts comprise of

managing a high-profile public relations campaign to heighten awareness and support for libraries of all types and heightening awareness of library and information profession throughout Indonesia.

encouraging cooperation and collaboration among Regional Library Association

1. In order to build good communication with its stakeholders, the Indonesian Library Association starts to

2. promote intensive and effective communication throughout the Association by issuing monthly newsletter.

2. encourage the use technology to achieve the Association goals and membership needs

3. increase the amount and diversity of financial resources to meet current and future needs

manage the Association legal and vital documents in a professional manner

The Indonesian Library Association supports government policies regarding access to information in electronic and digital format. The role of libraries is to provide ideas and information across the spectrum of social and political thought, regardless of storage media, and to make these ideas and this information available to every single citizen who needs it. Libraries should focus on developing policies that ensure wide and to some extent free access to information resources of all kinds. It is the Association policy to support libraries in helping users to access and utilize the widest range of valuable information and library materials for their informational, spiritual and recreational needs. The main strategy is

to accomplish this is a proactive role in facilitating the provision of education information literacy training. This training should enable all library users to access the information resources they need independently and with minor difficulties.

Indonesian Library Association will appoint a unit of the Association the responsibility to develop research papers helping members, libraries, and policy makers to clearly define library service in the context of users' information needs, lifestyles, state of the art technologies, and budgets. It also will support libraries by encouraging the development of evaluation criteria for successful library performance and helping libraries to evaluate their services and programs.

Another important agenda of the Association is to promote the value of a career and work in libraries and develop strategies bright young people for library service and provide continuing education for library personnel through sponsored training program. Creating good working conditions, supporting fair compensation and good reward system should be included in the agenda. ILA fully understands the undisputed contribution of information technology in storing and organizing information resources. It encourages its members to learn how to operate the emerging technology intensively.

#### D. Experiences and Challenges Ahead

After surviving the 98 economic crisis, Indonesia now is haunted by the second world economic crisis which was triggered by the melting down of US economy. Mass lay off especially in export-oriented industry such garments and auto industries is eminent. Forced

unemployment will be common sight on the days ahead in Indonesia which in turn can create unexpected social unrest. Horizontal conflicts can also happen especially after national legislative election on April 9, 2009. There are 44 parties that will contest in the 2009 general election. To the worst the uneven distribution of quality education and prosperity in Indonesia give a space for bad things to take place. In May 1998 bloody riots across the country killed hundreds of innocent people and damaged some strategically important infrastructures in the country.

This unhealthy climate as external factor will automatically have a bad impact on the Indonesian Library Association. Previous experiences have showed that some libraries faced serious financial resources or support due to the government tight money policy. This condition has had domino effect on the library management and performance. No collection development, low moral library staff, limited power supply and bad information services became common sight.

The Association board has some hindrances to make it a true professional and organization. At least there are 4 areas of concern which can become serious problems for the management of the Association and how it deals with them. They are:

Members of the Association have varied educational background in term of disciplines or majoring and academic level. Many of them have little knowledge on librarianship or library and information science. In some cases those who are on the top position of the library management have no idea how

to manage a library in professional manners. This condition happened especially at the government agencies. The appointment of library head has never had disciplines or educational background considerations or clear cut procedures. They got the position as a token of appreciation before pension term. The Association has taken some proactive approach to give somekind of librarianship knowledge to the newly appointed head of library. For example the former head of Jakarta provincial public library, Hermawan, successfully made some bold reinventions of delivering and promoting library service among Jakartans. He initiated the *Jakarta Library Expo* which arose people awareness of the important of public library to widen their knowledge and horizon. He has no library background but has authored some books on educational institution and management. He then keenly learned more about librarianship under the guidance of the so called "assistant team" consisting of the Association Secretary General, Indonesian Scientific Institution library staff and the now defunct Jakarta British Council Library. Under his leadership the Jakarta Public Library had respectful position among government-financed public services institutions. The story of success of a library head who had no initial knowledge on librarianship but good motivation, strong committment and high spirit can also be found at provincial public library of Nangro Aceh Darussalam.

The Association has serious problem in managing membership data due to the abstain of information technology data base management. Conducting membership data inventory has been

initiated in still modest way and snail pace but better than never. The main problem of implementing membership data management is the currency and completeness of the data available. Members are reluctant to submit the latest version of their data and the the Association has no special staff in charge of collecting and managing data. Realizing the importance of having accurate and relevant membership data, the Association broad will set a special unit to collect, maintain and update membership data which will be used for making the strategic planning.

Publications especially the issuance of scientifically library professional journal becomes luxurious program to be carried by the Association. Lack of fund and quality research based articles is the main culprit of publishing scientific library journal. The Central board has been making intensive approach to library schools especially to Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Humanities, University of Indonesia to set cooperation for publishing sustainable scientific library journal. Other important publications strongly needed are library manual book and newsletter. Starting this year, the Association regurally issues the monthly newsletter. The objective of publishing the newsletter is to disseminate information regarding the Association activities and to build good communication with the members.

Since the beginning of its establishment, members retribution is the durable problem facing the Association. It is in fact a difficult job to collect one US dollar a month from all members. To encourage members retribution collection by the Association

chapters (in the provincial level) or branches (regencial or cities level) the central board gives proportional share of the collected retribution. Due to the small amount collected, the Association managed to find financial resources. They come from the sponsors and participant registration fee of the Association annual workshop and seminar, National Congress, the National Library, and library friends.

#### **E. Conclusion**

In the coming years, The Indonesian Library Association has mounting tasks to do and some pressuring problems to deal with. It has to redefine its membership qualifications by setting more selected criteria of being a member of the Association. Financial matters will force the Association to be more creative in carrying out its programs. Some programs could be abandoned especially those which are not considered priority or trivial. In term of the unexpected economic crisis, the Association could help people by encouraging Indonesian libraries to give more valuable reading materials to learn.

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