

Thai Library Association Under the Royal Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

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Historical Background

The Thai Library Association (TLA), the only national library association in Thailand, was established officially on October 11, 1954 by a group of Thai librarians who attended library science courses organized at Chulalongkorn University under the Fulbright program from 1951 to 1952. Initially, TLA was in the form of a 'Librarians Group' which was founded upon the advice of Miss Mary Anglemeyer, the librarian of the United States Information Service in Bangkok. The group was headed by Miss Suthilak Ambhanwong, instructor and librarian of Chulalongkorn University at that time. The members of the group met regularly to discuss library problems and to find ways of improving their libraries. Much as these librarians valued their cooperation in promoting library service, they recognized the serious handicap under which librarianship in Thailand was laboring because of the lack of a professional association. Thus, the idea of a national library association was born.

The Asia Foundation approved a substantial grant to help set up the Association in 1954, and continued the financial assistance which has made it possible for TLA to embark on several worthy activities and projects. The founding committee was composed of eleven members as follows :

1. Mr. Lek Chaivasu, librarian, Department of Livestock Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
2. Mr. Suk (Wongsarn) Pongsatit, librarian, United States Information Service (USIS) Library
3. M.R.V. Jeerawatana Chakrapan, instructor, Department of Library Science, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University
4. Mr. Darun Pongsiri, librarian, Faculty of Pharmacy, Chulalongkorn University
5. Miss Uthai Dhutiyabhodhi, librarian, Medical Science University (today known as Mahidol University)
6. Miss Katalee Sombattsiri, librarian, the Central Bank of Thailand
7. Miss Jaroeyporn Pueruang, librarian, Ministry of Public Health
8. Mrs. Chalermwarn Choosup, librarian, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University
9. Mrs. Saisawart Patanatasanee, librarian, Tebsirindh School
10. Miss Bonchaor Ongkrapradit, librarian, Library and Museum Division Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, Ministry of Education
11. Mrs. Maenmas Chavalit, librarian, Adult Education Department, Ministry of Education

Since its founding, TLA has engaged in various activities and projects. The Association has been under the Royal Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn since 1976.

Objectives of the TLA

To enable TLA to reach its goal in the enhancement of librarianship in Thailand, it has formulated some objectives. These are:

1. To encourage unity and assistance among members
2. To promote library and information science, education, and culture
3. To help in the growth and development of libraries throughout the country
4. To share professional knowledge and experience with other library associations locally and abroad
5. To safeguard the welfare and the status of library personnel
6. To give consultation, supervision in the selection of library materials/furniture and the organization of any libraries upon request
7. To serve as a centre to receive assistance from any source: individual, organization or institution, so as to carry out the objectives of the Association
8. To be a non-political association/organization

Organization

The Thai Library Association is governed through an Executive Committee of 15 to 25 members elected from regular and associate members by the membership at large. They serve the committee for a period of two years.

The Executive Committee selects among themselves the officers of the Association and those members who will lead or take charge of the following positions and/or sections:

President
Vice-president/s
Secretary
Treasurer
Librarian
Hospitality
Membership
Chief of Academic Section
Chief of Public Relations Section
Chief of the **TLA Bulletin** Section
Chief of Fund Raising Section
Chief of Publications Section
Chief of Library Supervision Section
Chief of Foreign Relations Section
Chief of Research and Development Section
Chief of Publications Exchange Section
Chief of Library Standards Section

The Thai Library Association divides its work into ten sections. The duties of each section are as follows:

1. Academic Section: Organizes training courses, seminars, conferences, workshops and other forms of continuing education programs for members, librarians or other interested groups.

2. Public Relations Section: Makes known to the public the activities of TLA and of other library institutions; promotes the importance of books and reading through various media, e.g. broadcasting programs, newsletters, etc.

3. TLA Bulletin Section: Issues the **TLA Bulletin**, the official quarterly journal of TLA.

4. Fund - Raising Section: Locates sources of financial support and raises money from selling academic books, journals, library furniture, equipment, supplies, materials for the expenses of office maintenance, salaries of the permanent officers and various projects of TLA.

5. Publications Section: Publishes books in library and information science for research and study purposes, manuals for practicing librarians and other relevant publications.

6. Library Supervision Section: Provides consultation and supervision for the establishment of libraries and information centers; upon request sends volunteer librarians to help in the establishment of libraries.

7. Foreign Relations Section: Communicates and coordinates with foreign libraries and other institutions in the library field for the exchange of news and information; takes interest in being a member of regional or international library associations, e.g. IFLA, CONSAL; organizes professional meetings at the regional level, e.g. CONSAL; and at the international level, e.g. IFLA; locates sponsorship for fellowships and funds from international and foreign foundations/organizations for library projects and other library endeavors.

8. Research and Development Section: Promotes and conducts research in the area of library and information science.

9. Gift and Exchange Section: Serves as the clearing house for the exchange of publications for libraries both at home and abroad, and requests donations of publications from government agencies or from the general public for libraries in remote areas.

10. Library Standards Section: Prepares library standards and promotes the use of standards.

There are seven library groups affiliated with TLA. These are (a) the Academic Librarians Group; (b) the Library Science Teachers Group; (c) the School Librarians Groups; (d) the Special Librarians Group; (e) the Public Librarians Group, (f) the National Librarians Group and (g) the Vocational Education and Technology Librarians Group.

The work of the Association is carried out by a set of permanent officers headed by an executive secretary. The Executive Committee appoints Ad Hoc Committees in the implementation of various programs of the Association.

MEMbership

Membership in the Association consists of five categories. These are:

1. Regular members are persons who have completed library/information science courses from recognized educational institutions; practicing or former librarians of government agencies or organizations, with at least a bachelor's degree, or persons who have been associate members for at least three years and have shown evidence of their interest or submitted their scholarly works in librarianship to the Association.

2. Associate members are practicing or former librarians without the qualifications for regular membership; library science students; or persons interested in library work.

3. Honorary members are those who become members at the invitation of the Executive Committee.

4. Contributing members are those who give help to the Association and become members at the invitation of the Executive Committee.

5. Institutional members are institutions, organizations and corporate bodies

which are interested in library work and are accepted by the Executive Committee.

Headquarters

Since its establishment, the Office of the Thai Library Association has been situated in various places in Bangkok.

At the beginning 700 Payathai Road, near Chulalongkorn University (CU)

1957-1960 in front of Uthentawai Constructional School, Payathai Road

1960-1963 CU Alumni Center

1964-1974 21 Orathai Dhebkanya Building, Prasumain Road

1974-1976 The National Library of Thailand

1976-1994 273-275 Vibhavadi Rangsit Road, Payathai, Bangkok 10400

1994-present 1346 Akarnsongkro Road 5, Klongchan, Bangkok, Bangkok 10240

Activities and Projects

The Thai Library Association has carried out several activities and projects covering a wide range of interests in an effort to contribute to the development and advancement of librarianship in Thailand. Some of its major activities and projects are as follows:

1. Annual Library Conferences

The organization of annual library conferences is a regular endeavor of TLA. Since the first annual conference held in 1969, the TLA annual library conferences have become of prime interest to members, librarians and those in the library profession.

The objectives of the TLA annual library conferences are to provide a chance for librarians and those interested in the library profession to meet each other; to exchange knowledge, ideas and experiences; and to help solve professional problems. (Juree Usuparat 1979: 29) The themes selected are relevant to needs and interests of the librarians and to the current situation of the library profession and society as a whole.

The annual library conferences of TLA are officially recognized by both the government and private sector which usually encourage or sponsor their library/information personnel.

2. Training Programs for Librarians

Since 1956, TLA has conducted a series of training programs to train library personnel who have not acquired full qualifications from a library school. Basic courses in library science are offered together with practical work. At present, only the training programs for school librarians and for special librarians are undertaken for a one-month period during the summer session.

During the forty-five years of its existence, TLA has continuously carried out extensive training activities. Although TLA is not authorized to accredit library schools or organize library examinations for chartered librarians, the contribution of TLA to the library and information field is recognized by government agencies. The Ministry of Education has entrusted the Association with the responsibility of training school librarians working for the Ministry. This is also true for other government agencies and private sectors which send their library personnel for training in special librarianship.

3. Seminars/Workshops

Seminars/workshops are arranged for the discussion and exchange of

knowledge and ideas for specific groups on issues, topics or problems in all areas of librarianship. This is to enhance the knowledge of library personnel. Recommendations from the seminars serve as guidelines for the improvement of librarianship as a whole.

4. Status of Librarians and the Code of Ethics for Thai Librarians

TLA has tried continuously to win recognition for librarianship as a profession and to upgrade the status of librarians. This has been successful for university librarians whose status is almost equivalent to the teaching staff. For other types of libraries, the librarians' status is improving.

TLA also set up a Code of Ethics for Librarians in 1978 to serve as guidelines for good conduct and character covering moral rights and obligations.

5. Publications

TLA has published books in library science and in related academic fields, manuals and tools for the library, children's books and 'library series' books for the general public. From 1956-1999, a total of 117 titles have been published.

The quarterly **TLA Bulletin** (v.1, no.1, 1957 to date); the bimonthly **World of Books**, (1962-1972); the monthly **TLA News** (1982 to date) and the '**Research in Library and Information Science News**' (1993 to date) are among the Association's noteworthy publications.

6. Foreign Relations

TLA coordinates with library associations and institutions outside the country and participates in international programs, such as the International Book Year in 1972. TLA has been a member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) since 1961 and the Conference of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL) since 1974. TLA was also the host of CONSAL IX "Regional Cooperation for the Development of National Information Services" in 1978, and CONSAL IX "Future Dimensions and Library Development" in 1993. TLA hosted the 65th IFLA Conference in Bangkok on the theme, "Libraries as the Gateway to the Enlightened World" in 1999.

7. Library Standards

TLA has set up "Standards for Special Libraries" (1988), "Standards for Public Libraries" (1990), "Standards for Primary School Libraries" (1990), "Standards for Secondary School Libraries" (1990) and "Standards for Vocational Education and Technology Libraries" (1992).

8. National Book Week

TLA organizes in collaboration with the National Committee for Book Promotion '**National Book Week**' during the first week of April of each year. The celebration of National Book Week was initiated in 1972 in accordance with the International Book Year declared by UNESCO. The activities include book fairs, book exhibitions, seminars, lectures, discussions, concerts, shows, plays and award ceremonies for the authors, publishers and illustrators of the best books of the year for fiction, non-fiction and children. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn is always present during the opening ceremony and presents the awards to the winners.

9. Library Week

Since 1976, TLA has organized '**Library Week**', usually in August of every year in collaboration with libraries in Thailand, to promote the importance of reading

and libraries among the public.

10. Consultation, Supervision and Establishment of Libraries

TLA provides consultation and supervision for the establishment of libraries upon request. In 1998, TLA raised funds from the public to establish a library in "Ban Hang Maeo" Police Border School, Chanthaburi Province and donate Thai dictionaries (Royal Institute Edition) to all Police Border Schools in the country. This is regarded as a special community services to poor students in the remote areas.

11. Best Library Awards

Presentation of awards for the '**best libraries**' of the year encourages the improvement of the libraries and their activities. The school libraries award was initiated in 1974; the special library in 1975; the public library in 1976 and the vocational education and technology library in 1989.

12. Recognition for Library Donors

This project which was started in 1981 gives recognition and expresses appreciation through the presentation of plaques to persons who donate money/effort, contribute to the advancement of libraries and librarianship or help in the construction of library buildings.

13. Outstanding Person Awards

Outstanding persons in library and information science of the year have been presented awards since 1995. This is to honor librarians in all types of libraries, library and information science teachers/educators and information professionals who provide outstanding services.

14. Best Research in Library and Information Science

Since 1998, TLA has set up an award for outstanding research and thesis which contribute to the development of library and information science. This award is to promote interest in the importance of research in the field.

Summary

The Thai Library Association (TLA), the only national library association in the country, is the hallmark of the library profession. Since its founding on October 11, 1954, it has engaged in various activities and projects to meet its objectives. Affiliated library and information service groups collaborate closely with TLA, who in turn coordinates its activities with libraries, library schools, related institutions, organizations and associations both within and outside the country. Its impact is recognized by the professionals and the public. Indeed, the Thai Library Association plays an important role in the promotion of librarianship as a profession vital to an informed and knowledgeable society.

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