

# **A Rethinking of the National Library's Roles in Bibliographic Control in The ICT Age, with Special Reference to the Region of Southeast Asia**

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## **Keywords**

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## **Abstracts**

Historically and traditionally, bibliographical control conducted by national libraries in Southeast Asia regions as dictated by various deposit acts are limited to the printed materials. Later on it was expanded into audiovisual materials such as microfilms and cartographic materials, the results are published in national bibliography, albeit most of the contents covered are printed materials, very few audiovisual materials and hardly no electronic records. With the coming age of ICT, especially the Internet, almost every body could published electronically at the Websites any materials in any topics, including the topics related to SEA countries. Alas these electronic documents are not covered by national bibliographies, hence it is suggested that the national bibliography should covered websites-based-electronic records as long as its related to each country. Also it is suggested that it is time to storage digitally national folklores, folksongs, important speeches, famous poetry, quotations etc in the national library's database as part of cultural heritage as those materials are not always covered by other institutions such as archives and museums . These tasks conducted by national libraries should be supported by national legislation, selectivity-based, stored electronically and permanently in the national library' database and become a part of special collection known as *bibliographica* or *bibliografia* for examples *Bibliographica Siam*, *Bibliografica Indonesiana* etc.

## **1. Background**

In various reference works, the definition of national library is almost the same. This paper used the definition by UNESCO in its *Recommendation concerning the International Standardization of Library Statistics*, which stated that national libraries are libraries which, irrespective of their title, are responsible for acquiring and conserving copies of all significant works published in the country and functioning as a "deposit" library, either by law or under other arrangements. In many South-east Asia nations, national libraries are separate, independent institutions, created by law or other arrangement, none like Library of Congress which is a part of US Congress and acted based on copyright issuance. However, all national libraries have similarities in the form of collecting the nation's publication

## **2. Scope of national bibliography.**

Theoretically, national library collections cover all library materials such as books, pamphlets and printed sheets, cartographic materials, manuscripts, music, sound recordings, motion pictures and video-recordings, graphic materials, three-dimensional artefacts and realia, microforms, continuing resources or commonly known a serials and electronic resources. As the national library's main product is a national bibliography then a full national bibliography may include books, periodicals, sound recordings, microforms, music scores, pamphlet, government documents, cartographic materials.. From other point of view, the works covered by national libraries are printed materials and non-print materials which could or could not includes electronic resources depends on the interpretation of non-print materials. A full national bibliography may include standard cataloguing information for last item titles and may include information of first coming publications to permit advance ordering of new products. However, in reality not all those materials are covered by national libraries as shown in various national bibliographies in Southeast Asia countries, at least in Indonesia.

Although the legal deposit laws enacted by Parliamentary contains a substance of automatic process envisaged by the law lawmakers, in practice it is far from that vision. Many national libraries have been forced up to keep voluminous correspondence with publishers asking them for missing legal deposits and reminding them of their publication. For example National Library of Indonesia sent reminders to publishers who (a) send only one copy (the National Library is entitled to two copies of each edition); (b) fail, for various reasons, to submit legal deposits, or are not aware of their legal obligations; (c) usually waited until they are reminded of their obligation; (d) have ceased to send legal deposits to the National Library of Indonesia, cannot be contacted and letters are returned undelivered The National Library of Indonesia's efforts does not succeeds wholly, owing to the publishers' negligence, the weak rule of law –which becoming more obvious after the fall of President Soeharto in 1998 and the era of regional autonomy who consider it is unnecessary to submit local publications to the national library and less efforts by the National Library of Indonesia's side. Santosa found that the *Bibliografi Nasional Indonesia's* [National Bibliography of Indonesia] coverage is less than those acquired by the Library of Congress Jakarta Office (Santoso 1990) and for materials on Eastern Indonesia, the National Library of Australia's coverage is better than National Library of Indonesia's collection<sup>1</sup>. On films, Dina Isyanti showed that the commercial films are not covered by the legal deposit law as envisioned by National Library of Indonesia while documentary films are preserved by National Archives, foundations and individuals (Isyanti 1998).

## **3. Internet and electronic documents.**

Internet defined as the networks of computer networks enables the generation of electronic documents stored at various Web sites. Those electronic documents kept in

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<sup>1</sup> The National Library of Australia, and Library of Congress Jakarta Office I are very active in hunting the publications by contacting local agents or sending the team for document hunting to the area.

government Websites as well those produced and stored at private sites caused some bibliographic control difficulties as they are not covered by the legal depositories in their respective countries. The same difficulty is also descending to documents available only online.

The same problems also occurs to another national library function i.e. hold and keep up to date a large and representative collection of foreign literature including books about the country. The collection of literature about one country some times called *bibliografia* or *bibliographica* followed by the respective country names such as *Bibliografia Indonesiana*, *Bibliografica Thailandia*, *Bibliographia Filipinas* etc., and sometimes given as a course in certain library schools in the region. The national library does not encounter major problems concerning literature about the country apart from tracing the relevant literature, the acquisition and the available budget. However, the national library encounters major problems concerning the electronic documents stored at various Websites about the country

#### **4. National libraries' efforts to cover all kind of materials**

As many existing legal deposit laws do not always cover all kind of library materials including the electronic documents, documents available only online and various Websites generating electronic documents on certain countries, then the national libraries should heightened their efforts to cover all materials with various methods as given below

##### **4.1. New interpretation of the existing legal deposit laws.**

Not all Southeast Asia 's existing legal deposit laws stated bluntly that the legal deposit laws cover also electronic documents. For example , Indonesia's legal deposit law states that the publisher [not document generators ] should submit two copies to the national library of print works and record or recorded works (Indonesia 1990). The term *recorded* or *rekam* in Bahasa Indonesia could be interpreted as also including the electronic documents because electronic documents are also recorded information (in widest term) works; the same with print materials. Alas this new interpretation is not always accepted by the publishers who regarded the recorded works only cover audio-visual not electronic documents! National Library of Indonesia tried to use new interpretation of the existing deposit law which states that record materials also cover electronic documents but it deemed to be a failure. Various critics charge that even for the printed materials the National Library of Indonesia is still not successfully covered all national imprints let alone the electronic documents!

##### **4.2. Introducing new legal deposit laws.**

As the existing legal deposit laws do not cover electronic documents, then the second approach is to introduce new laws. This approach is clearly not easy and extremely high cost because revising the old deposit laws and replacing it with the new ones, need time to prepare the draft, negotiations with the stake holders, lobbying with the members of Parliament from all political parties who are not always sympathetic to library matters. For example in Indonesia, the draft of the national library system comes to square one (again) because of lack of funds for drafting, negotiation and lobbying

while effort to revise the existing legal deposit acts come standstill because of various reasons among others lack of financial supports.

#### 4.3. Some exemptions.

Perhaps for some national libraries, it is time to think about some exemptions in the legal deposit laws. For example exemption should be given to the publisher(s) who encounter high unit cost of publishing any particular documents or its unique or labour-intensive production method. The same complaints of the high cost of reference materials has been voiced by members of Indonesian Publishers Association while in Czeck the National Library encounters almost the same problem (Stoklasova 2002)

#### 4.4. *Co-operation with document generators*

In the era of massive information, some print and or electronic documents are generated by non-open-publishers such as universities, research institutions. Those documents commonly known as *grey literature* as these publications are not available through normal bookselling channels. Examples are reports, doctoral dissertations and conference proceedings Although some of those publications are commercially available through bookselling, the majority are not, hence they are not covered by national bibliographies. In that case, it is necessary for national library to work closely with other document generators to register any publications. Those publications are registered in the national bibliography with additional information of the document locations. In that case the national bibliography functions indirectly as a non-formal union catalogue. For those needs, national libraries have to works closely with document generators such as universities, research institutions, private organisations. These co-operations depend largely on the national library side hence the national library should actively engaged, negotiated, persuaded and lobbying with grey literature producers.

Incidentally in Indonesia there is a decree by State Minister of Research and Technology to ask the research institutions to submit their print products to the State Minister of Research and Technology who in turn will proceed them to National Scientific Documentation Centre. Alas the majestic effort does not work always well.

For state universities, there is a request to submit their Directorate General of Higher Education-financed-research papers and doctoral dissertation to the Directorate General of Higher Education who will pass it to the National Library of Indonesia. In fact, the fate of the submitted documents is unknown and very few reached the National Library of Indonesia's collection. With such conditions it is necessary for the national libraries to work closely with the universities and research institutions to obtain their products These co-operation should be expanded into electronic document generators and also registered at the national bibliography.

#### 4.5. *Digital libraries*

Digital library is an organized and managed collection of information in a variety of media (text, still image, moving image, sound, or combinatios thereof), but all in digital form. A digital library is of common interest to the national libraries in Southeast Asia regions as well as the world. One example of the international collaboration in this field is *Bibliotheca Universalis* Originated in the G8 electronic library project in 1999,

this is a project to network the national libraries and other institutions in the world for the purpose of sharing digital information and texts under the common theme of “Exchanges between People.” (Ikuhara). No information available concerning the participation of Southeast Asian national libraries in this project, although it is assumed that one or some national libraries in the Southeast Asian region are involved in that activities.

For Indonesia, the development of digital library is pioneered by academic libraries, instead of national library. Hence it is common to find digital libraries among academic libraries, although the term digital libraries is a combination of print and digital collection (Sulistyo 2004). Currently the coverage of digital publications by the National Library of Indonesia is very limited or nothing at all although the National Library of Indonesia produced some digitized works such as the 19<sup>th</sup> century illustrator Johannes Kracht.

#### *4.6. Web archiving*

Although there are legal deposits laws, which by some national librarians are interpreted as covering all publications, in fact packaged electronic publications and online publications are not covered by the existing laws. Those materials are important for the nations especially those containing information on (certain) nations because they are rapidly increasing in quantity and because they are accessible only for a short period time. Hence it is Southeast Asia national libraries’ duties to seek ways and means to capture, store and provide intangible digital information on the region’s information before it is lost. For those huge tasks, Southeast Asia national libraries are expected to take the lead responsibility for long term archiving of digital publications before they gone from the Websites.

#### *4.7. Electronic national cultural heritage*

UNESCO support the preservation of various temples, historic buildings, cities, manuscripts as shown in World Memory Heritage and World Cultural Heritage. Some government generated various Websites about the cultural heritage for example in Indonesia including the famous temple of Borobudur, the excavation sites of prehistoric man in Sangiran (all in Central Java). The government institutions usually created Websites containing information on those heritages. The private sectors and some times individuals established electronic heritage sites for examples in Indonesia various cities, rich with pre-independence-era buildings are preserved –electronically- at various sites; however, those sites are not covered by the national libraries. For example in some big cities in Java there are some electronic cultural heritage initiated by individual or universities such as in Jakarta (the capital), Bandung (West Java), Semarang (Central Java) and Surabaya (East Java), some are illustrated with ancient, Dutch era buildings (Budiardjo 1997).

### **5. What the national libraries should do?**

With the coming of age of Internet with its electronic documents and the huge amounts of printed publications, then the national libraries of Southeast Asia encountered huge challenges and constraints in their works. For those challenges and constraints, the Southeast Asia national libraries are obliged to do some brave action, apart from their traditional mission.

First, interpreting the existing legal deposit law(s) or proposed the new legal deposit acts. Traditionally, legal deposit laws' purpose is to build and preserve collection of materials published in the respective country. Legal deposit assists in preserving the nation's documentary heritage so that it is available for the people. As the present legal deposit laws are considered not broad enough to cover other than printed materials, then in its articles, documents or works or publications or records should be interpreted as including electronic documents and also covering document available online.

Second, revising the existing laws and introducing the new legal deposit bills which requires that the publishers of electronic documents should be required to deposit documents with the national library. Legal deposit laws will apply to all documents that are printed or produced in the country, for example Indonesia, or by a publisher who resides the respective country (Indonesia). It is likely that Web sites that are based in certain country will fall within the scope of legal deposit. If the electronic document is made available by means of Internet (for example, a web page) then the publishers must enable the national library to read and store, in both electronic and non-electronic form, the required number of copies of the document in a usable form. The other alternative (introducing the new bill) requires manpower for lobbying, times, money, lobbying etc. For example the National Library of Indonesia encountered various constraints in introducing the new bill of National Library System. On the other hand, critics also point out that the existing Indonesian legal deposit acts of 1990 is ineffective in its implementation and could not compete with some foreign national library branches which operates in Indonesia., for example Library of Congress, National Library of Australia, Royal Netherlands Institute for Language and Anthropology who established offices in Jakarta for procurement of Indonesian library materials

Third, national library should decides about some exemption for any particular document owing to the high cost of producing it or its unique or labour-intensive production method. This approach is commonly applied in South Africa (South Africa 1997).

Fourth, closer co-operations among national libraries in the Southeast Asia region. Although there is a regular meeting of directors of national library in the region, the meeting should followed by further action conducted by the below –national library-director-level personnel. For in-country activities, the respective national library initiates close co-operation with academic institutions, research institutions, government and non-government organisations, especially in covering, registering and storing grey literature is compulsory.

Fifth, preserving the nation's published and electronic cultural heritage. Southeast Asia nations are known for their attempts to document their published heritage and in doing so makes that heritage known and accessible to present and future generations. Beside that, the national library also charged with collecting materials about the country in which the national library is situated and keep up to date a large and representative collection of foreign literature including the books about the country.

In some literature, collection on certain country regardless their origin is known as *bibliografia* or *bibliographica* for examples *Bibliografia Indonesia*, *Bibliografia Filippina*, *Bibliografi Siam* etc. This *biliografia* is a comprehensive collection of domestic and foreign publications about the country and maintained by the national library. With the coming age of Internet, the national library should maintain an

electronic cultural heritage whose collections are not limited to the national library collections. National library hosts a web service on behalf of a range of cultural institutions including galleries, museums, libraries, archives and historical societies. This web service provides access to many pictorial collections, songs, poetry, important speeches, paintings from the one search screen which means bringing a nation's cultural heritage together and to the fingertip of users. These electronic cultural heritage hosted by national library require close collaboration with other cultural institutions and organisations and overcoming legal, technological, cultural, textual, graphical and other non-technical obstacles.

## **5. Remarks**

National library is responsible for acquiring and conserving copies of all significant publications published in the country and functioning as a deposit library, either by law or under other arrangement. Besides that the national library keep a large collection of foreign books about the country. Although supported by legal deposit laws, national library in Southeast Asia encounters problem, at least in Indonesia, on the practice of legal deposit is far from automatic process. The national library reminds the publishers of their obligations to send two copies to the national library. This burden is becoming heavier and more difficult with the coming of electronic documents, especially those available online and at Websites. The existing legal deposit law does not always covering electronic documents, hence it is necessary to interpret the existing articles on deposit or revising and/or introducing the new legal deposit laws.

In the implementation of legal deposit laws, the, national library works closely with other document generators such as universities, research institutions, government and non-government organisations in registering, keeping and storing publications, especially those of grey literature. Whatever the form of media, the national library can offer consultation in one place a collection of material from the country

With the coming age of Internet, the national library encounters various Websites, online documents etc. Using the information and communication technology, national library collaborating with other cultural institutions such as galleries, museums, archives and historical societies established a national electronic cultural heritage hosted by the national library. The electronic cultural heritage contains cultural items including digitized publications and pictures including pictorial collections, important selected speeches, songs, poetry, etc.

## **6. Conclusion**

The national libraries in Southeast Asia encountered the (almost) same problems on coverage of its bibliographies, especially with the electronic documents and Web pages. There are some alternatives for the solutions and with all strength, will, capabilities and braveness to face the new world, it is hoped that the national libraries in Southeast Asia region could enter the era of Internet without difficulties and overcome problems posed by electronic documents, documents available only online, web pages

with confidence and at the same still serving the nations ' information needs as its main function for the benefit of mankind.

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