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	<p>Getting closer to customers: the mushrooming of Alternative libraries in Yogyakarta, Indonesia</p> <p>Ida Fajar Priyanto Gadjah Mada University Library Yogyakarta Indonesia idadfp@lycos.com Priyanto.Ida@ugm.ac.id</p>
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Abstract

In a developing country, children’s literature and children’s libraries are often neglected—this situation extends even to elementary schools and public libraries. Librarians always say that the problem is budget constraint, but in fact the main source of problem is actually the lack of consideration of the issue by decision makers in the government or institutions and the absence of librarians’ ideas on the provision of services for children.

Another major problem in a developing country is the absence or malfunction of a school library that results in children’s lack of reading materials. School children in a developing country often have to buy books from teachers and those are the only reading sources at school. They cannot go to the public libraries either, because they are in school when the public libraries are open; when they finish their study at school, the public libraries are closed. The rest of their time everyday, instead, is only spent by playing games instead of reading.

Some young people in Yogyakarta initiated the so called “Alternative Libraries.” Alternative libraries are libraries that do not belong to the government or local authority and are funded by private organizations or individuals. The term is actually an answer to the absence of reading facilities for children. Some of the alternative

libraries are dedicated as special libraries such as the music library, arts library, anti-drugs library, women and children empowerment library; but some others are dedicated to children and the family.

The existence of those libraries really attracts children to make use of the libraries. They do not always use the term “library” there is even one which is called “Book Monster.” Those libraries for children belong to and were initiated by private organizations, but their existence has enabled children to get reading materials and to play.

Commitment, dedication and the closeness of librarians and children are indeed the key to the success of the libraries for children.

Keywords: children, books, alternative libraries

Introduction

The transformation from the industrial to the information society is resulting in tight competition. Some people have been very advanced in accessing information while others still find it hard to get information. To some extent, the latter problem is caused by the lack of information services such as the library and public information services.

The library does not always have good information services for a number of various reasons. In a developing country, the library is always considered as a cost-centre and is not a priority to get a large amount of the budget. This has resulted in a limited budget for libraries. What is even worse is that state-owned libraries have few books and other reading materials for children.

The biggest problem is actually the absence of libraries for children. The government usually builds elementary schools with a limited number of rooms—six rooms for grade 1 to grade 6. This causes the teaching staff to occupy one of those six rooms for themselves and the headmaster. The library is built by the school funded by the parents (School committee).

The very small budget of the provincial library and the distance of the library from the children's homes mean children are unable to visit the library. In addition, most schools have no libraries for children to read.

Indonesian Geography

Indonesia lies between Singapore and Papua New Guinea in Southeast Asia. Indonesia is an archipelago-state with 219.2 million people.

During the last six decades, the total population of Indonesia has been tripled from 73.3 million in 1945 to 219.2 million in 2005. The annual population growth has reached 1.3 percent in the last five years period (2000-2005).

More than half of Indonesia's population lives on Java Island. This condition has not changed much in the last six decades, 65.0 percent in 1945 and 58.8 percent in 2005. Therefore, until now Java Island is the most densely populated island in Indonesia with the population density 1,001 per square kilometers. The percentage of population living in the urban areas increased quite significantly in the last four decades, from 14.9 percent in 1961 to 48.3 percent in 2005.

Yogyakarta Special Province

Yogyakarta is one of thirty-three provinces in Indonesia. It is situated in the middle of Java island. The province is roughly about 3.186 km² and its population is about 3,280,000. It is divided into 5 regencies, namely Sleman, Bantul, Kulon Progo, Gunung Kidul and Yogyakarta City.

Yogyakarta is called a special territory because of the fact that the sultanage is still respected and acts as the cultural centre. The sultan of Yogyakarta is also the governor of Yogyakarta and Yogyakarta has a sort of rule of the special territory. And it is this rule that makes it different from other provinces in Indonesia.

The province has a special status due to its history of the province. In 1945 the sultanate of Yogyakarta merged itself to Republic of Indonesia which was proclaimed on August 17, 1945.

Yogyakarta's size is about 3,186km² and 3,280,200 people live in this special province. Yogyakarta has entitled several names 'City of Students', 'Tourism City' and 'City of Culture.'

There are many universities, hundreds of high schools and around 1,800 elementary schools in Yogyakarta. Most of the elementary schools do not have adequate or comfortable libraries. Some of them do not even have libraries. Another problem facing the elementary schools is that every student is required to buy a package of books every semester and teachers use only those packages of books for teaching and learning. Thus, school libraries malfunction and the limited time for students to go to the school library has caused the library to remain idle. School children only have time to visit the libraries right after they finish their classes but most libraries are closed. That is why alternative libraries are the place for them to visit.

The lack of reading Habit and literacy in Yogyakarta is still a concern to deal with. While there are about 37,000 people who are illiterate, the habit of reading is not very high either. And this has caused libraries to have a limited number of users.

Libraries in Indonesia

Libraries in Indonesia may be categorized as National Library, Provincial Libraries, regency/city libraries, academic libraries, special libraries and school libraries. However, there is another one type which is usually run by an NGO. This type of library is usually called an alternative library. Alternative libraries are varied but they usually specialize their collections and/or users.

Condition of Provincial and Regency Libraries in Yogyakarta

In Yogyakarta, there are one provincial library and four regency libraries. Those libraries are managed by the local authority of Yogyakarta since the reformation era. While formerly, the National Library supported the provincial library; at present the library has to manage itself with the support from the local authority.

The Provincial Library was formerly planned to be the National Library of Indonesia as at the time of establishment, 17 October 1949, Yogyakarta was still the capital of Indonesia. However, in 1950 the capital was moved to Jakarta and the library's status was changed into Provincial library.

In the beginning the library was located in a small building in Jalan Mangkubumi and it was moved to Jalan Malioboro (the main road of Yogyakarta). The library got another building in 1984 to accommodate its collection. And nowadays, it has four separate buildings which functions as children's library unit, library services unit, digital library and electronic services unit, and training unit.

The provincial library has various services such as book loan service, reference service, deposit collection service, rare collection, audiovisual collection, user education, children's library, mobile library and photocopy service

The size of the collection belonging to the Provincial Library is as follows:

Type of collection	2003	2004
Non-fiction	71,341	71,864
Fiction	5,640	5,788
Reference	6,857	8,700
Deposit	11,044	11,702
Yogyasiana	574	583
Children's collection	12,172	12,331
Open University collection	1,642	1,642
Rare collection	1,929	1,929
Old collection	2,582	2,582
Quarantine	1,200	1,200
Magazine	1,228	1,241
Newspaper	137	137
Audiovisual collection	751	751
Map	0	82

The number of visitors of the Provincial Library in 2002, 2003, and 2004:

Year	Number of Visitors
2002	146,469 visitors
2003	36,600 visitors
2004	31,074 visitors

The limited size of collection and limited increase in collection development has meant that the library is unable to fulfill the demand of the users. And this is also the reason why the number of people leave the library. The above table shows a very sharp decrease of users in 2003, while the number is also lower in 2004.

According to the Provincial Library, the fact that the library for children is located in the main road of Yogyakarta has caused problem for children to come to the library. First, the road is so crowded and so scary for children to go by themselves and there is no space for parking area. In addition, the opening hours do not match with children's time. As the provincial library opens at 8 a.m. and closes around 3 p.m., children cannot visit the library due to their activities at schools. Another problem facing the provincial library is the limited budget that makes it difficult for the library to fulfill the demand of children's books. The two old mobile libraries cannot reach the area of 3,186 km².

Another scene shows the mushrooming of ‘alternative’ libraries in Yogyakarta in 2004. ‘Alternative’ library is a library managed by an NGO and it has special collection as well as an increasing number of users—adults, young adults and children.

Alternative Libraries in Yogyakarta

As stated earlier, alternative libraries are libraries run by NGOs. The library staff are young people who are interested in developing literacy and the reading habit among the community. They are either students, social workers, artists and even writers. Most of the alternative libraries started to open in 2003 after those young people met together and discussed the importance of literacy and the reading habit among people.

The libraries have special collections and get support from local partners and community. Alternative libraries have 4 categories. They are:

- 1. arts, culture and tradition libraries**
These libraries specialising in arts and culture as well as tradition conservation.
- 2. community and children libraries**
These libraries specialising in community and child development. They also have activities for children besides offering library services.
- 3. study and research libraries**
these libraries dedicate their services for researches and their collection also include research reports.
- 4. plus libraries**
These libraries combined their libraries with coffee shops and/or book selling as well as for public meeting, discussion room or exhibition.

The alternative libraries that are available for children and family are:

- a. 1001 Buku
This is a library that provides children’s literature.
- b. Arita
This library offers children various reading materials related to applied technology.
- c. ECCD-RC
ECCD-RC has collection on children’s education and child development.
- d. Mabulir
This is a library that provides religious materials.
- e. PB NH. Dini
N.H. Dini is a well-known author and she opens a library that offers Literary materials including her own novels and essays.
- f. Perpustakaan ’45
It deals with children and children’s literature.
- g. Rumah Baca Kobar
This library has collection on Indonesian children’s literature and culture

- h. Rumah Pelangi
This library offers collection of drama and stories for children.
- i. USC-Satu Nama
This is a mobile library for children and has collection on child development, children's books and folktales.
- j. Book Monster
It provides children's book collections and toys.

The community and children libraries do specialise in developing children's reading habit and family reading. Some of those children's libraries are permanently open for children in certain areas, while others are mobile. In other words, there are three types of community and children's libraries:

- a. urban children's libraries
- b. rural children's libraries
- c. mobile libraries

The urban children's libraries open their libraries in the city and they provide information services and a playground for children. They do not always use the name "library." One is called the "Book Monster." They do so, because they are of the opinion that knowledge and information are big things like a monster. So children are smaller than the information provided in books. The urban children's libraries in Yogyakarta are included in the category of alternative libraries as they are not managed by the local authority, but by young people who see the need of children to have space to read and play.

In fact the term "Perpustakaan" in Indonesian or library has been characterized as a place that is dark and full of old books, where people have to be quiet and where librarians are afraid of losing their books, so they stare at everyone in the library. These characteristics appear in the state-run public library. Another problem why the image of a library is not very good is because nobody has seen or visited a good library. School children never see good libraries and the teaching method is not based on reading nor aimed at making use of library materials.

The urban children's alternative libraries have a better space and collection compared to the state-owned public library. Another important aspect of urban children's libraries is the closeness of librarians to children visiting the library. They always encourage children to use and benefit from the collection and they can talk to children. Unlike the state-owned public library that has such a long bureaucracy, the urban children's libraries always have a personal approach to the children. Besides, they adjust children's time to visit.

However, nothing is perfect. The problem that the urban children's libraries face is mainly funding. With the minimum budget, librarians cannot buy many new books for children.

The rural children's libraries are libraries open for children living in the rural areas. Unlike the librarians of the urban children's libraries, librarians working in the rural areas have harder jobs but they lack expertise and knowledge. The rural children's

libraries provide minimum facilities for children to read. Sometimes they do not have chairs and tables to read so that children have to sit down on the floor to read.

Meanwhile the mobile alternative library is a library that offers services from one place to another. Among the mobile alternative libraries, there are two libraries that are worthy of note: a bike library and private car library. The bike library is an individual effort to invite children to read. The man rides the bike from home to home in the rural area and he serves children with children's books and magazines. Meanwhile "Satu Nama" library operates a private car as a mobile library. The difference between a bike library and car library is the area coverage. The bike library runs within a specific community and operates in the afternoon when children are already at home; while the mobile or car library runs from one community to another, especially in rural elementary schools. It operates from morning to afternoon.



The above picture is an example of how close the librarians of the mobile alternative library and children is. The librarians are young people who know how to play and talk with children and children enjoy getting reading materials from the library.

Children's alternative libraries have two things to provide: information services and programs or activities for children. Most of the libraries serve children with loan services while the activities or programs for children include story telling, traditional games and other how-to activities.

Networking among Alternative Libraries

The alternative libraries have their own network with monthly meeting among them to discuss various problems, activities and development. The library management is the

topic mostly discussed in the meeting. They are aware that they have not found the best system for library service.

However, the most demanding topic of their discussion is public support and budget. The alternative libraries do not have a fixed budget for the library services. What they do is getting donations from various sponsors to run the library services.

The most exciting discussion is developing reading habits of the community—young and adult. They always try to find ways to create reading habit. There is one library that holds story telling, children opera, children's painting, etc. and these are activities that other libraries also try to do.

Conclusion

Apart from the state-owned library, alternative libraries have struggled to develop community reading by providing library services and activities. While state-owned library have a small budget to support their library services, the community they serve is larger and the library does not have good opening hours for community. Alternative libraries are mushrooming to support provincial libraries, but they have not been publicly recognized so well and need more funding from the local authority. The recognition and support from the local authority is required to make their programs run well.

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