



Thai Library Association in the Time of Change

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Abstract

The Thai Library Association (TLA) is the only national library in Thailand.

This paper describes its background and its major national activities during the year 2007. The new Constitution of the Thai Library Association (2008), Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professionals (2007) have been announced. The Thai Library Association roles in library development, professional development, LIS Research, services to the society and foreign relations were highlighted.

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.

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

New executive board with new vision, new strategies and new activities

Since 2007 which is the first year of the two-year term of the present executive board, the TLA vision "*Towards standards, cooperate and collaborate for academic, professional and societal development*" has been set as guidelines together with strategies plan and activities for the TLA executive board member to follow for the year 2007-2008. This is to cope with changes in the profession and constraint due to the unattractive image of the TLA.

Major new projects include: issuing new journal "LIS Research Journal" (bi-annually), improvement of TLA code of ethics for librarians, TLA Bulletin, library standards and TLA regulations; formulation of standard for LIS education and information literacy for Thai society. More continuing profession development programs have been organized in collaboration with libraries, library schools, universities, institutions around the country as well as more networks and cooperation.

Constitution of the Thai Library Association 2008

The 1996 Constitution of the Thai Library Association has been revised and approved at the annual meeting of the TLA. This is to meet with changes and current situation of the profession and the society and for the effectiveness and efficiency of the TLA management on the basis concept of participatory management and good governance .

Major revisions include the objectives and organizational structure.

The objectives of the TLA was broaden to include its scope, not only librarians or libraries, but also other positions and information institutions which are called by various names . This will enable TLA to cope with changes and reach its goal in the enhancement of librarianship in Thailand. In addition, the objectives reflect the roles of the professional association in promoting professional education, status, ethics, continuing professional development, competencies, cooperation and network and services to the society.

The TLA organizational structure has been major revised. The Thai Library Association is governed through an Executive Committee of 25 members, at least 20 elected from regular and associate members by the membership at large and not

more than five elected from chairs of the library groups affiliated with the TLA. They serve the committee for a period of two years and can not continue more than two terms.

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, two Vice-presidents, two Secretaries, two Treasurers, Hospitality, Membership, Chief of Academic Section, two Chiefs of Professional Development Section, Chief of Research and Development Section, Chief of Professional Standards Section, Chief of the Journal and Academic Media Section, two Chiefs of Customer Relationship Section, Chief of Foreign Relations Section, Chief of Fund Raising Section and Librarian.

Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professionals 2007

TLA has tried continuously to win recognition for librarianship as a profession. TLA set up a Code of Ethics for Librarians in 1978 to serve as guidelines for good conduct and character covering moral rights and obligations. Chutima Sacchanand (2004) compared the 1978 Codes of Ethics for Librarians of the Thai Library Association (TLA) and of other five library associations. It was found that Code of Ethics for Librarians of the TLA stipulates equal provision of services to users, not acting in self-interest and continuing professional development. These ethics appear in the codes of the American Library Association, the Library Association (U.K.), Australian Library and Information Association, Japan Library Association and Singapore Library Association. The difference is that the TLA Code of Ethics for Librarians does not cover intellectual property, censorship, privacy, and confidentiality as the other codes.

From this finding and to cope with paradigm shift in the LIS profession, the Code of Ethics for Librarians 1978 has been revised. The new *Code of Ethics for Librarians and Information Professionals 2007* has been replaced. The nine items of the Code broaden its scope to include not only librarians but also all information professionals and covers important topics of interests in the modern digital society as other library associations' codes.

Thai Library Association and Library Development

TLA conducted various projects and activities to promote library development in the country in various ways.

Library standards

TLA has set up and revised various standards to serve as guidelines for library development as follows: Standards for Public Libraries" (2007), Library Standards(2006), Standards for Special Libraries" (2002), Standards for Vocational Education and Technology Libraries"(1992) Standards for Primary School Libraries(1990), and Standards for Secondary School Libraries (1990). The Library Standards Section is responsible in preparing library standards and promoting the use of standards.

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.

Consultation, Supervision and Establishment of Libraries

TLA provides consultation and supervision for the establishment of libraries upon request, and send volunteer librarians to help in the establishment of libraries.

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, librarianship and library and information science education or help in the construction of library buildings.

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, works and achievement.

Thai Library Association and Professional Development

To promote and develop the professional competencies of TLA members, library professionals and staff, those who practice library services profession and other interested group. *the Academic Section* organizes annual conference, training courses, seminars, workshops and other forms of continuing education programs.

Several activities and projects covering a wide range of interests have been carried out in an effort to contribute to the development of its members, librarians and other professionals and for the advancement of librarianship in Thailand. Some of its major activities and projects are as follows:

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, e.g. the theme of the TLA annual conference of the year 2007 is "Information Literacy for Sustainable Development". 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.

In addition, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has its aim to promote reading, and reading habits among Thai students and Thai people as reading is the key instrument of lifelong learning. Since last year, the MOE has organized the annual Reading Exhibition and Conference as the biggest event of the year and the TLA also joined the event by organizing the conference on the topic related to library and reading promotion.

Training Programs for Librarians

Since its existence, TLA has continuously carried out extensive training activities. In 2008, fifteen short courses/training programs have been set in its annual plan. 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.

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.

Publications

TLA published the bi-annually TLA Bulletin (v.1, no.1, 1957 to date) ; the quarterly TLA News (1982 to date) and the new bi- annually peer reviewed research journal 'TLA Journal of Research in Library and Information Science' (2007-).

The TLA through its Publications Section or through cooperation with private and government publishers publishes books in library and information science for research and study purposes, manuals for practicing librarians and other relevant publications.

Professor Khunying Maenmas Chavalit Award

With the financial support of the Stock Exchange of Thailand, *Professor Khunying Maenmas Chavalit Award* was established since 2007 to outstanding person in the field who highly contributed for the profession for a long time and Professor Khunying Maenmas Chavalit is the first who received this one million baht award.

Thai Library Association and LIS Research

Research role of the TLA is emphasized to accomplished the TLA objective and to bring value to the profession. TLA through The Research and Development Section and other sections encourage and support research in the area of library and information science through its publication "TLA Journal of Research in Library and Information Science" (2007-), its continuing profession development program, and also educating through the course "Research in Library and Information Science" via distance education in cooperation with STOU , the largest distance education university in Thailand. Moreover, research

presentation session was provided at the TLA annual conference. These provide opportunities for members to become informed and educated about research, encourage new research and application that advance the field of library and information science.

There are still more in the plan to accomplish, e.g. to give awards and grants to support a proposed LIS research project or activity, to promote a research

Thai Library Association and Services to the Society

Services for the society are emphasized to get the recognition by the professionals and the public. As TLA emphasizes its vision "To promote cooperation and network between members, library and information professionals and institutions", TLA has signed memorandum of understanding with many institutions, e. g. with Phuket Local Administration and Phuket Rajabhat Universities for the development of public libraries, school libraries and librarians in Phuket; with Kanchanaburi Rajabhat University for the development of libraries in the province, with Faculty of Informatics, Mahasarakarm University to be LIS professional development center of the TLA in the Northeast of Thailand, with Science and Technology Knowledge Center (STKC) in organizing conference, seminars and workshop, also the digitization of the TLA Journal for public use. TLA is going to sign memorandum of understanding/ agreement with more institutions, e.g. the School of Liberal Arts, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University to be LIS professional development center of the TLA via distance learning, with Walailuk University and Nakornsrihammarat Local Administration in the South for the development of public libraries and organizing continuing professional development programs, with the Association of Social Science Teachers in conducting conferences and seminars and promote students' information literacy competencies.

TLA has also established Serm Panya Library as the public library and Professor Khunying Maenmas Chavalit Learning Center as a resource center for LIS professional development, supported by the Stock Exchange of Thailand.

Thai Library Association and Foreign Relations

TLA coordinates with library associations and institutions outside the country and participates in international programs. 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. In 1999, TLA hosted the 65th IFLA Conference in Bangkok on the theme, "Libraries as the Gateway to the Enlightened World".

Summary

The Thai Library Association (TLA), the only national library association in the country, is the hallmark of the library and information profession. Through its new vision, new strategies and new activities, the TLA executive board member collaborate closely with and its affiliated library groups, libraries, library schools, related institutions, organizations and associations in the city and in the province, and both within and outside the country. Its impact is recognized by the professionals and the public. 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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