

**KEYNOTE SPEECH**

**BY**

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BRUNEI DARUSSALAM**

**REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND  
MUSEUMS**

**THEME:**

**“ACCESS AND COLLABORATION: SEARCH AND DISCOVERY  
THROUGH INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES”**

**AT**

**INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, BERAKAS  
WEDNESDAY, 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2011  
9.30 AM**

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim.

Segala puji-pujian bagi Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala, selawat dan salam ke atas junjungan besar kita Nabi Muhammad SAW, keluarga dan para sahabat serta pengikut-pengikut Baginda yang jujur lagi setia hingga ke akhir zaman.

Yang Mulia,

Dayang Nellie binti Dato Paduka Hj Sunny, President of the Brunei Darussalam Library Association as Chair of Organizing Committee;

Yang Berhormat,

Pehin Orang Kaya Hamzah Pahlawan Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Abdullah bin Begawan Mudim Dato Paduka Haji Bakar,  
Minister of Communications;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarkatuh and a very good afternoon.

First of all, I would like to thank the organizing committee for inviting me to be part of this Regional Conference on Libraries, Archives and Museums. I would also like to extend my heartiest congratulations to Brunei Darussalam Library Association on its silver jubilee and for organising this much needed conference with the theme 'Access and Collaboration: Search and Discovery through

Innovative Technologies', where librarians, archivists and professionals in the information and knowledge management world can come together to share experiences and views on the important role of libraries and cultural heritage institutions in the development of the nation. This is indeed necessary to boost the image of libraries and to instil in others the relevance of libraries and cultural institutions in this age of information and communication technology. It is timely as it allows the library, archives and cultural heritage professions to relook at themselves and to evaluate if they have caught up with the times or are being left behind and becoming less relevant. It is my ardent hope that this conference will provide a venue to assess where we are, where we should be going, whether we are prepared for the future and the steps needed to ensure that libraries and cultural institutions continue to have a place in ensuring the knowledge based economies and the identity of the nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cultural heritage institutions are institutions which are responsible for the preservation of tangible or physical artefacts as well as intangible attributes of the society. Cultural heritage institutions such as the Museums Department, the National Archives and the History Centre are responsible for the preservation of historical monuments, landscapes, artifacts, works of art as well as documents, archives and records, which are not necessarily in paper

form only. Libraries, however, generally refer to the place housing a large collection of books which may include digital sources, print, audio, and visual materials in numerous formats.

### Relationship between Libraries, Archives and Cultural Institutions

Libraries and cultural heritage institutions complement one another. The relationship between these institutions have always been and should always be close, as they serve the same clientele, which are information and knowledge seekers. Their core businesses are interlinked. While cultural institutions serve to preserve for posterity, their other core business is to facilitate research. Libraries and the vast information they hold within can enrich the understanding of the artefacts held in the cultural institutions.

Although I speak in one breath relating to information repositories, libraries and archives, “archives” and “libraries” are quite distinct from one another in relation to the nature of their holdings. At the risk of over-simplifying, archives, which are closer to cultural institutions, hold the records and written documents of the Government, which reflect the political, social and economic history of the nation and are primary sources, while libraries, hold considerably more secondary sources rather than primary sources.

At the national level, the National Archives, besides Libraries and Museums, and any other cultural institutions, are among the

country's core research resources. Basically, Libraries, Archives and Museums are three pillars of cultural institutions. These three entities need to collaborate more closely not only with each other but with other interested parties, such as education institutions, related government agencies as well as Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector.

The relationship between libraries and cultural heritage institutions is even more relevant and necessary in small populated countries like Brunei Darussalam. With a small population, with limited resources, be it manpower resources or financial, cooperation is fundamental. Institutions working together saves money and time, reach users more efficiently and deliver the uniqueness of resources that libraries, museums and archives provide. At this juncture, I am pleased to share that the e-Library and B-Heritage online projects of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports will soon be available while the e-archives project is in the pipeline. Although all these three e-services are currently stand alone services, for the linkage and sharing to be more effective, such services should be integrated. All these will inevitably enhance the relationship between libraries and cultural institutions and users will be able to check the holdings of all these institutions online. Currently twenty libraries are committed to be part of e-Library.

## Innovative Technologies and Information Science

Knowledge is the basis of a nation's life. Knowledge is intrinsically linked with information. In this age of information technology explosion, the dissemination of information is so much easier, so much faster and there exist multiple modes for information dissemination. Knowledge seekers of today have more access to information than ever before. Search engines make it much easier than the traditional manual search through a library's catalogue and the cross-referencing which the librarian provides.

With that, the role of the traditional information repositories may be jeopardised if they remain stagnant. New technologies need to be embraced and utilised to enhance the services of libraries, archives and other information repositories. The traditional concept of libraries and other information repositories need to be redefined from a place to access paper records or books to the one that also houses the most advanced electronic resources, including the Internet, digital libraries, and remote access to a wide range of information sources. With access to information just a click away and without having to make a trip to the library, library users and especially our younger generation may feel less need for traditional information repositories.

Efforts need to be taken to show them and the public at large that libraries, archives and other information repositories are still

relevant and essential to the knowledge and information seeker. Adaptation to the information explosion era requires profound changes in the organizations, not just in the skills but no less important, in attitude. While the 21<sup>st</sup> century librarian, archivist and information manager face more challenges, they however, have access to exciting opportunities on information science and information management technology to allow them to consider broad, flexible and cooperative efforts in their strive to serve the community effectively.

As a former archivist, I am extremely excited at the opportunities which information technology provides. As archivists and custodians of our cultural heritage, our core business is preservation of our legacy. Another core business of archivists and custodians of cultural institutions, and one which they share with librarians is the information science aspect and the facilitation of research. Here ICT and the exciting opportunities it provides which was undreamt of a few decades ago, serve to make the life of the information manager as well as the information seeker so much easier and more enjoyable.

As information services become more complex in nature and more technologically sophisticated, managers need to keep pace with innovations and thinking in the field to offer the most professional service with the resources they have. Librarians should be skilled at discovering and handling information from whatever source

including the internet. This is where the services of librarians and information managers have advantage because the world wide web is so massive and is akin to a jungle for one unsure of the effective ways of navigating it to access the information required.

### CHANGE is inevitable

The unparalleled advances in management information technology in the past decade has brought about radical changes in organisational form and function unanticipated before. The development in this fast-changing field and its impact on information storage, information management and searching tools forces information specialists to rethink strategies. There is a need to allocate human and financial resources effectively, use current facilities to their maximum advantage, and plan future technology acquisitions from an informed position. The potential for change is here and information managers need to grab them. All these opportunities, if employed, can increase efficiency, effectiveness, creativity and innovativeness.

In our wish to serve the community and specifically the information seeker, electronic information storage and retrieval should be the norm, while not compromising on the need to retain the traditional hard copy. So while the traditional archives and library should be retained in terms of storage, our information professionals should



take on additional jobs of electronically storing and retrieving their holdings.

### Library Development in Brunei Darussalam

Currently the types of libraries which exist in Brunei Darussalam include public libraries, special libraries, reference libraries, academic libraries and school libraries. The Language and Literature Bureau, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, which runs the public libraries, act as the lead agency in Brunei on coordination of library development programmes with other key players being the University Brunei Darussalam Library. The Ministry of Education is the lead agency on provision of formal training for librarians basically through the vocational schools.

Although Brunei Darussalam does not have a National Library, the legal deposit is entrusted to the Director of Museums under the Preservation of Books Act 1967. Three copies of nationally produced publications are deposited in the Brunei Museum. The Public Library under the Language and Literature Bureau has also since the 1970s, been a depository for all Brunei publications. The other main function of National Libraries to maintain national bibliographic control is also carried out by the Museums Department which publishes the National Bibliography. However, this is not often enough and there is a huge backlog. Although the Preservation of Books Act makes no mention of National

Bibliographies, such publications should be done regularly and on an annual basis. With the cooperation of librarians from all the various libraries, and with the lead from the Language and Literature Bureau, there is absolutely no reason why the National Bibliography cannot be produced annually. In terms of archives, as provided by the Brunei National Archives Act 1975, the National Archives of Brunei is the lead agency for archives. The current Director of the National Archives is the Director of Museums. Both the Language and Literature Bureau and the National Archives, Museums Department are under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.

The absence of a “national library” does not mean the functions of the national library cannot be conducted. In some countries, the National Library is the same entity as the University Library, in some it is placed together with the National Archives. Librarians in Brunei should not use the absence of a National Library as rationale for inertia and inactivity. As I have shared above, the two main functions of the National Library, the legal deposit and the national bibliographic control, have been addressed. In view of the demography and the realities of Brunei Darussalam, including the small population base, perhaps some other set up may be more practical than having a stand alone National Library. Whatever the formula, it should not divert from our core business to serve the community and the intrinsic right of all to access to information and knowledge. I therefore take this opportunity to call on all Brunei Darussalam librarians and archivists, as specialists in the

information science field, to put on your thinking caps and come up with feasible proposals on the way forward for library development in Brunei Darussalam, taking into account the demography and connectivity of the Brunei community and the ease and practicality of collaboration.

### Information Specialists, Handlers and Providers

I understand that there are currently 2 librarians with Phd, 3 librarians with masters degree, about 32 librarian with degrees, and 30 librarians with diplomas. I am encouraged to learn that more and more librarians are now getting their national diploma locally in Brunei Darussalam and that since the librarianship course run by one of the vocational schools in Brunei in 2001, as many as 154 librarians have qualified with national diplomas. However many of the information repositories in Brunei are still managed by non-professionals or para librarians. There is a need to 'license' the librarians and information handlers to ensure they have the right qualifications from the lowest post. There should be a regulatory body to implement this and to keep a register on them. Giving incorrect information is dangerous. There is a need to review the schemes of service of librarians and archivists and training should be made compulsory. In short, there is a need to establish a framework for library qualifications to regulate standard of information handlers and providers.

## Image of Librarians and Information Specialists

There is also a need to upgrade the image of librarians. With the advent of ICT development, the role of librarians have changed and libraries have transformed or should transform. Librarians are better known now as information specialists. Society in general must accept this new norm or paradigm shift so they can understand deeper the use of information and how social media and mobile technologies have impacted the use of information and libraries. Society must know that librarians are the 'people behind the scene' gathering the information, organizing it, preserving it so it is accessible to all. Machines cannot do it. It's the information specialists who do all these tasks. It is equally important, if not more important, for librarians and information specialists themselves to understand the need to change. Information specialists need to change their mindsets to adapt to the new types of information seekers. Information specialists need to comprehend and accept the change in their roles. Libraries and information repositories which fail to adapt to the needs of society and stay relevant to the community they serve will find themselves marginalised in the long run.

To conclude, libraries should exude aura of dynamism, libraries should continually upgrade themselves, be alive, be a place that can promise exciting discoveries to your readers and provide the best possible resources and services to the community. The core business is to serve the community by providing access to information; your clients should be central to all your strategies.

Restrategies and reach out to the younger generation. The feel of a book in one's hands definitely beats reading from a monitor screen. To information specialists, have pride in what you do. Society will always require the services of libraries and archives.