

Information Policy: The Diminishing Role of Library

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Abstract

Library is a compulsory component in designing the establishment of an information policy since it has the expertise as an information provider. Thus, developed countries always consider library as being central and an essential counterpart in information policy because only the library knows and understand what information to be provided to meet the needs of the government for developing the nation. In light of this, library is thus always at the forefront of monitoring the direction of information policy. However, not all governments are able to see the importance of library. This paper reviews literature in information policy that seeks to indicate the relation between library and information policy in Malaysia. It is evident that the role of library in such an endeavour was crucial and remarkable in the past, but is gradually diminishing as information technology progresses. Information technology has overshadowed, and remarkably cast aside library significance since 1994. Analysis has revealed that Malaysia is not conforming to the global trend. Giving too much priority to information technology invites information policy flaws. The role of library should not be abandoned, but should instead be returned to its place; in order to come to a holistic, balanced and wise information policy.

Keywords: Library, knowledge society, information policy of Malaysia, information provider, information technology and communication

Introduction

Library is a distinct institution that plays prominent role in shaping the knowledge society closely driven and guided by information policy. The architecture of information provision stems out from this institution as it has the expertise in acquiring, disseminating, organising and administrating information. Thus, library is not only collector but also as stewards safeguarding the nation's heritage with in turn assure equality of access for the citizens (Reding, 2005). The impact of library to culture and civilisation is tremendous and not deniable. In addition, library is also central in the creation and establishment of information society which sometimes called knowledge society. The development of the phenomenon demands in re-defining the position and objectives of institutions dealing information and knowledge (Ryynanen, 1999). In light of this, library is identified as one of the key elements for open access to information without neglecting the basic role of library which concentrates in collecting and organising information and offering access needs to be maintained.

The significant role of library in information policy making has been asserted by scholars and researchers such as Lamberton way back in 1974 followed by Porat (1977); Chartrand (1989); Eisenbeis (1989); Hill (1994); Rowlands (1999); Arnold (2002a, 2004, 2007); Smith (2004); Duff (2004); Kamar (2006); Bustamante (2007); Pajaro & Betancourt (2007); and Chen et al. (2010). Library and information service is not only fundamental but should also be the main player in information policy making.

Only information professionals are capable to deliver their expertise in monitoring, regulating, shaping and implementing activities such as transborder data flow, national information system, information expert and profession, information skill, content dissemination, laws related to books, collection policy, data usage and distribution, reading campaign, information retention, public access centre, knowledge sharing, national bibliography, repository library, acquisition of foreign publications, availability of information and books access.

In repond to the above matter, Orna (2008) suggests the development of information policy be coordinated by an advisory committee representative of private sector, local government, academicians and professionals related to library and information science.

However, in some countries, the roles and works of library is often underestimated. Information possessed by the institution is not regarded as important as information technology (IT) which is only tool for organising and managing the information. This paper highlights the role of libraries in Malaysia in connection with designing and developing information policy for the country or the so called the national information policy.

Information Policy

There is no single accepted definition for information policy (Duff, 2004). The definition are subject to the researche'rs stand which perceives information policy from either limited or wider scope (Braman, 2011) other than the dynamic and innovative nature of information. From the micro perspective, information policy is define in general as a combination of legislation, procedure, guideline which regulate the production, managment and use of information which shape the role of information in society. On the other hand, the macro perspective view information policy could not be separated from other fields such as education, science and technology culture, public administration transparency, information technology and health (Bustamante, 2007; Soler, 2007).

According to Maxwell (2003b) information policy is a social political, regulation, economic and technological decision related to the role of information in society. Pajaro & Betancourt (2007a) on the other hand offers a broader definition by asserting that information policy is a guideline for planned actions to ascertain access to universal information to carry out social, economic and political activities in the course to achieve the nation development goal. This paper prefers a broader definition offered by Maxwell (2003b) dan Pajaro & Betancourt (2007a).

Culture of knowledge

Knowledge culture among the people in the West remembers to emphasize technologies for knowledge-related activities, such as acquiring, creating, sharing, and disseminating knowledge; and storing information. A knowledge-based culture is evidenced by:

- (i) People reading everywhere, such as on public transport or while waiting for a bus or train,
- (ii) The large number of publications, such as books, journals, magazines and newspapers. The library's statistics in 2005 showed that China has published a total of 180,000 titles, the United Kingdom has published 116,000 titles, the United States has published 60,000 titles and India has produced 60,000 titles and published 45,000 titles (Salim, 2011),
- (iii) Documentation of comprehensive government information. It has been shown that a variety of educational activities benefit greatly from a culture and practice of good documentation, as evidenced in Europe (European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2006),
- (iv) The number of books read by students in higher education institutions is high. The total number of books read by students in Australia is 180 books. In Indonesia, it's 94. Students in India have read 130. In Thailand and Brunei, students only read 26 and 56 books, respectively (Salim, 2011).

People clearly understand the role of technology in the following manner:

- (i) Publication of scholarly materials is not only in paper form, but also published online, and
- (ii) The production of films and documentaries, in terms of the amount produced and how interesting they are, using information technology.

The opposite occurs in Malaysia. Salim (2011) implicitly indicates a culture of knowledge does not exist among the people. The absence of knowledge culture is reflected in the following areas:

1. The number of books read by people in a year is low. The average Malaysian reads two books a year, often through relaxed reading, in the form of comics, magazines and newspapers.
2. Reading material and various entertainment types are light. Of the 10,310 registered titles in a year, only 1,273 (or 32%), is categorized as a scholarly books, which can improve the mind, innovation and knowledge of the reader. Sixty-eight percent is in the form of leisure reading materials, in addition to textbooks, academic resources and children's books.
3. The number of books published by Malaysians is low. Statistics in 2005 showed that only 10,310 titles of books in various fields were registered during that year.
4. The sharing of information is low, even among academics. The Mokmin study (2005) found that 67 percent of IPTS lecturers did not publish produced information on university websites.
5. Information technology in schools that is provided is motivated by profit. This was demonstrated by a number of computer failures of projects, particularly in state schools. Only two out of 300 schools in Sabah have computer laboratories, which leaves 298 schools that need them before the Ninth Malaysia Plan can be successfully completed (Anon, 2010).
6. Students go to schools and universities just to get a certificate, rather than from interest in sciences. This is reflected in the practice of reading among students in Malaysia, which is far behind other countries. Undergraduates in universities in the country read on average only 4 books a year.

As a result of using or providing information technology without a strong culture of knowledge among the people, the following conditions occur, namely:

1. Skilled people use technology but do not understand the role and use of technology;
2. Many technologies are used to disseminate and produce entertainment, gossip, pornography, defamation and non-scientific materials;
3. The government website does not provide sufficient information, and information is out-dated and irrelevant;
4. Technology is not fully utilized in rural internet centres, libraries and schools.

Libraries in Malaysia have not risen to help shape the culture of knowledge among the people of this country. This is due to the fact that national information policy development does not start with information and documentation, but instead starts with technology. While not likely to change, information should not be based solely on Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In other words, it should be extended far beyond basic information technology. Policies relating to acquiring, creating, sharing, disseminating and storing information should be clear and comprehensive. Technology alone cannot create a culture of love of knowledge that forms the basis of a knowledge-driven society, but requires clear national information policies.

Library and information society

In the information age, citizens must be able to find and use information to meet their needs. Information is the key raw material but with no value if access to it is problematic. There is no other institutions carries out this long-term, systematic work except library (Ryynanen, 1999). Information is closely related to culture in a way that information yields knowledge which then contributes to people's creative power. It will be more systematic if the public can be offered accessed to knowledge and cultural treasures in the custody of library. The significant role of library should be depicted in the designing of information policy of the country. It is typical in many governments that information policy is designed as there is a requirement to develop information society. In this regard, the issues are largely related to the increasing pervasiveness of information technology (IT) as asserts by Julien & Helliwell (2001).

The role of library is event pivotal in the development of information society. It acts as gateways to the information resources on the global superhighways. Library plays an important role as providers of electronic information and access points to informations in the efforts to bridge the gap between the information rich and poor. Infact, the stability of economy is also dependent on the access to information because national development is very much influenced by the amount of available information (Nwosu & Ogbomo, 2010).

Apparently, this institution is also noted for its function as catalyst for human progress and aid in the development and transmission of knowledge and culture and innovation in society. Also, in a plural society like Malaysia, library ensures social inclusion and cohesion by providing access to information and knowledge to all the citizens.

In the midst of information society era, library facilitates both local and international information networking and knowledge sharing through digitization and virtualization of access to local and external content (Amonoo & Azubuike, 2005). This means the information society is driven by information and communication technology (ICT) along with new skills for the population, government's support, and sustainability (Rao, 2006). The impact of ICT is tremendous in all aspects ranging from politics to social.

Information society according to Martin (1995) is a society in which the quality of life, as well as prospects for social change and economic development, depends increasingly upon information and its exploitation. The living standards, patterns of work and leisure, the education system and the marketplace are influenced markedly by advances in information and knowledge. Knowledge-based activity particularly economy, is characterised by critical mass of knowledge workers, innovative and competitive service sectors, knowledge-induced poverty reduction, high value-added information-intensive commerce, high technology industries and inclusive participation in economic activities. In the light of this, library is the only institution capable to shoulder information related responsibility, i.e by proving and ensuring quality information and services, digital and traditional content, knowledge and information networks and ICT facilities to facilitate life-long learning and communication. This will in turn nurture and acculture the availability of diverse knowledge sources, foster free access to government information, encourage freedom of expression, tolerance of opposing political and public views, availability of diverse communication channels and defence of human rights.

In the contrary, research by Owen, Cooke & Matthews (2012) reveals that government is always lack of understanding of the value of information. Thus, information profession could help to improve government's appreciation of information and the role that the profession itself could play.

Information policy ought to have a higher profile than ever before as it is central to the government's need to improve efficiency in how it operates, showing that it is worthy of trust through the transparency and open data initiatives and getting economic benefit out of the data it collects.

Library's role in information policymaking

Kargbo (2007) argues that matters relating to information policies should be the responsibility of the library. The library has a policy to select, organize and disseminate information, in addition to handling issues related to it. According to Gill (2001) and Kargbo (2007), as well as information providers, libraries also need to be a developer. They play an instrumental role in the information policymaking, especially national information policies.

Scholars in the field of information policy commonly use two approaches in the development of policies. Both general and specific approaches focus on economic, social and cultural activities (Gray, 1988). An approach based on library and information policies can be seen clearly in the classification of information policy as advocated by Bustamante (2007). According to him, the information policy can be classified into eight groups. These are public library access policies; the promotion of reading habits and control of books policy; science and technology policy; a policy regarding mapping and statistical information; a policy pertaining to the general public accessing to government information; a traditional information policy; communication technology-related policies; and societal information policy.

Rowlands (1999) also established that the root of information is closely related to information and library science. From a total of 771 articles related to the root of information reviewed, a total of 540 articles were published in information and library studies journals, 92 were articles in legal journals, 32 in the field of public administration, 32 in political science, 26 in the field of communication studies, 24 in the social sciences, and 15 other articles were on management and business. The analysis shows that information policy is synonymous with information and library science. Prior to that, Lambertson (1974) found that the fourth issue of information policy issues, often from produced by scholars, were involved in the library's policies, particularly policies relating to public libraries and archives.

Similarly, Soler (2007) insisted that the national information policy was originally made up of library, archives and documents. However, the basis of information evolved with the development of social media technology centres and access to more public and private information.

ICT policy scholars still insist that the information policy is not free from the influence and auspices of the library and information sciences. Arnold (2007), for example, found an information policy published before the 1980's which explains that the national information policy aims to regulate the "... creation, distribution, and use information." Meanwhile, Gray (1988) claims there are two alternative approaches for making or policy formulation, namely information, information policy based on the concept of "library," and the information policy based on the concept of "information." The NATIS program, launched by UNESCO in 1974, is an example of using the information policy development library approach. This approach has seen the development of policies regarding information and the scope of services provided by library information. The "information" approach, according to Gray, was built by experts who consider library information as only one component of information networks.

Recent claims, on scientific and technical information, were triggered by the urge of society to obtain information to meet the needs of the industrial revolution period (Soler, 2007). This is happening similarly to the increasing demand for printed books and newspapers triggered by the industrial revolution, thus facilitating the establishment of the first public libraries, particularly in England and the United States. The establishment of libraries allowed workers to read and learn; thus alleviating the fear that this group would be left behind and miss opportunities. The first public library opened in the city of Boston in the United States in 1854, evidence of the importance of information resources to the community. Libraries functioned as a source of information to scientists and technocrats in England until special libraries were developed to provide services to these people in 1957 (Gray, 1979).

Though Owen, Cooke & Matthews (2012) report that though currently, the role of library and information professionals in the UK information policymaking is not distinct, but there is a strong suggestion that those working in knowledge and information stream are to be involved in information policymaking so as to make the policy more information content rather heavily on technical issues. But, the information professionals need to change their mindset in order to make their voice being heard by the government. Information professionals ought to be more interested in access rather than the control of information, a trait not traditionally associated with information professionals. In the midst of economic climate which exerts on efficiency savings, library and information professionals can show the good optimum use of information can save costs. Also library and information professionalst could articulate to the good value and benefit of information to government and the nation if they are made clear and understand of the value of information. This shows that the role of library and information professionals crucial.

In New Zealand, information and knowledge are considered holistically to constitute a national information policy (Smith, 2002). Strong frameworks of law, convention, and policy exist and continue to develop, to ensure the persistent creation and use of information and knowledge. Thus since 1980's the national information policymaking has been asserted by certain elements in the library sector, and has been formally taken up by the professional association called LIANZA. Though IT is always at the forefront in discussion about information policy (that make technology factors crowding out knowledge content), it is strongly felt that the content (information and knowledge) that should remain at the heart of consideration of national information policy. Infact, the closure of some government libraries, and the subsuming of others within IT-driven Informations Centres, provides evidence of the failure of this policy of reductionism.

The development of a national information policy in the 1970's focused on the role of a national library and provision of access to information generated from within the country (Arnold, 2007). UNESCO led an international effort aimed at ensuring access to information resources. It started with the United Nations International Scientific Information System (UNISIST) program launched in 1972 with a focus on technical and scientific information. Document Information Policy Objectives: UNISIST Proposals issued by UNESCO in 1974 said the basis of information was developed as a source of information for social and economic development. In the same year UNESCO launched a program that focused on NATIS bibliographic documentation, libraries and archives. Neither program is suitable for developing countries, as they do not specifically address issues in those countries.

A merger of the NATIS UNISIST program and PGI in 1976 aimed to streamline the role and scope of the program. Guidelines were submitted by PGI to expand the scope of the national information policy of technological and scientific information and bibliographic information in areas of knowledge and other types of information (Wesley-Tanaskovic, 1985). A UNISIST conference between the two countries in 1979 was held to support the expansion of the concept of information and the need to review the "national focal points" to improve the coordination of all national systems.

UNISIST outlined the policy to be achieved by the program: to develop the documentation centre and library infrastructure; to produce equipment for communication between systems; the recognition of the role of existing institutions; to utilise scientific information and technology for economic and social development to the optimum, especially among developing countries. On 11-13 December 1974, UNESCO organized a specialist conference in Paris to analyse the role to be played by UNESCO in helping member countries, especially developing countries, to plan and develop a national information system, known as NATIS (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 1975). The outcome of the proposed study was to produce guidelines for the development of national information policies, to design methods for the analysis of user requirements, and to take an inventory of existing resources. Arnold (2007) named the approach adopted by UNESCO as the concept of "information" to the national information policy.

Libraries in Malaysia

Library and information service has not been acknowledged as playing its role as central agency for providing and regulating information for the nation. The government of Malaysia is not paying serious attention to matters relating to library which finally impacted the information policy making. Public libraries are still without with the latest infrastructure to support their services to the people. It is timely to have high end facilities such as ubiquitous library (cross border information resource centre that enable users to borrow and return materials from anywhere).

Ahmad (1998) reported that a survey on library development in Malaysia carried out by Ferguson in 1950 discovered that there was no planned library service and education for adults; library collections are poorly organised; lack of qualified and trained librarians; absence of library facilities; and no financial support from the government (Ahmad, 1998). It is the British Council that extended the culture of the British in establishing library particularly the public ones for the country.

After 40 years of independence, library and information services gains its importance in relation to accomplish the education systems. The role of library and information services depicted in the National Policy for the Library and Information Services 1990 are such as to be involved in the formulation of policy and decision-making process; involve in the planning of research and development activities; involve in educational process; and to be involved in the intellectual development of people, economic activities and fulfilment of their cultural and recreational needs (Ahmad, 1998). But the strategies formulated were limited to providing appropriate library and information services, commensurate with needs of clientele; acquiring library materials within and from outside the country; encouraging publishers to increase substantial publications in all fields of knowledge, sharing of resources to maximise benefits from the investment of public funds and act as repository for all library materials. Library concentrated on proving documentation of resources according to national standards; provide access to databases, provide facilities for lending, reference, referral, analysis of information, bibliographic control, selective dissemination of information; and provide user education to create an information-consciousness society to derive benefit from the use of library materials. These strategies and efforts were limited to basic library activities. The National Policy for Library and Information Service did not reveal that library has important function in promoting the creation of information or knowledge society and one of the essential components in information policymaking.

As time passed, though the government of Malaysia initiated a project called mylib with the aim to promote information and knowledge delivery effectively and less costly to all level of community (in line with knowledge society) and providing local content in the Internet, but its implementation is of question as national library is not involved. Library continues to be cast aside with the perception that this institutions is not relevant to information policy making. This is evident when studies in information policy after Sajjad in 1996 failed to relate library to information policy.

Researchers tend to be more focussed and engaged with IT and the Internet. This is evident in research executed by Ramli (2001); Mashkuri et al. (2002); International Telecommunication Union (2002); Xue (2005); and Ida (2004). The diminishing role of library is due the fact that the provision of information in Malaysia was not the sole responsibility of the library or documentation centres, but also involved other agencies. For example, the Ministry of Information was responsible for the operation and coordination of all government media activities through three departments, the Department of Information, of Broadcasting and the Film Department of Malaysia. Education and Media Services via radio and TV programs is involved in the provision and dissemination of information by the Ministry of Education. The National Museum is the department responsible for the dissemination of information on national cultural heritage (Wijasuriya, 1979).

In the 1980s, research on information policy in this country still revolved around the authority of the library and information services, with a focus on the development of national information systems. For example, Wijasuriya (1981) discussed issues of accessing information, recognizing the importance of information to national development. Hence, the provision of information cannot be ad hoc and decadent, but instead should be coordinated and integrated.

In 1982, the national information policy (Oli, 1982) still focused on the scope of national information systems. At this point, the formation of a national information policy and the establishment of an organizational structure for the national information system were in line with developments at the international level, such as the General Information Programme (PGI), which was a combination of the existing programs of UNISIST and NATIS (Wesley-Tanaskovic, 1985).

Through mechanisms, such as the Seminar on National Policy for Libraries and Information Services in Kuala Lumpur on 29-31 October 1984, the country's need for information, current problems, and necessary elements of a national information policy began to be identified (Oli, 1991). The result was a task force formed on 16 November 1984, and in early 1987, the draft of the national information policy of Malaysia was completed. The policy was recommended by the government in June 1989 with the name "National Policy for Library and Information Services." However, the underlying principle of these policies was related to library and information services (Oli, 1991). This is contrary to the guidelines issued by UNESCO (Wesley-Tanaskovic, 1985). Baark (1985) suggests the formation of a national information policy should be viewed in broader terms, beyond the aspects of socio-cultural and economic.

In the early establishment of the National Library of Malaysia, the issue often focused on was the development of physical infrastructure, the construction of libraries, and reading material being provided, specific provisions of the Malaysia Plan (MP) as MP3 (1971-1980), MP4 (1981-1985) and MP5 (1986-1990). Starting with MP6 (1991-1995) Saw wrote that government information technology, in the broad sense, refers to all elements of technology that enable the acquisition, storage, processing, transmission and delivery of information (the 6th Malaysia Plan, 1991). The Government should also pay attention to patents by creating Intellectual Property Policies for commercialization purposes. This policy aims at creating an environment that promotes trade potential of technology and economic activity and creates new employment opportunities through the formulation of policies and guidelines for intellectual property rights. Hence, universities and research institutions are more apt to create an environment that encourages innovation and invention (MP6, 1991).

According to Chaudhry (1993), Malaysia is ahead of Saudi Arabia in creating information policies. Malaysia has a good policy framework and adequate legal provisions to have a good public library system at the state level, including rural areas. The policies have managed to maximize use of resources in the country through an inter-library loan system as well as served a platform for networking between libraries in the country. Basic research by Rehman (1996) was conducted on the information base for developing countries. His research used Malaysia as a case study. The information sector is a rapidly evolving discipline, and the library is a small subset of the dynamic information. Rehman began an extensive research profile out of library authority, showing common information in 11 new categories. The categories are: environmental information, information needs, information systems, information policy issues (access, literacy, censorship, copyright, special needs groups and official information), provision of labour, the role and contribution of information agencies, legislation, technology and its impact, publishing and distribution of information, process development and implementation of policies, and international dimensions.

The situation worsened when the Library Association of Malaysia, popularly known by its acronym as PPM, from the beginning of its inception, its scope of activities is only focused on the professionalism and consolidation of the library. PPM should try to keep pace with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), which upholds the fundamental values that emphasize the freedom to access information, ideas and work, rather than imagine the freedom of expression, as contained in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which believes that people, communities and organizations should have equal access to information, imagination, ideas and work for social welfare, education, culture, democracy and economy. IFLA's mission accounts for the access, protection and preservation of documentary heritage, with the aim of ensuring the freedom of accessing information as a human right, that access to information, ideas and imaginative work is fair and balanced between the creator and the consumer, and that the awareness of policymakers about the role of libraries in developing an informed and knowledgeable society, and promotes the preservation of information and knowledge to strengthen community knowledge bases.

Libraries need to have clearly defined roles, as practiced in developed countries whereby the institution is shaped by the culture of knowledge. The culture of knowledge embraces all segments of society, either directly or indirectly involved with the addition of knowledge activities; where all actions of individuals or society are determined, decided and implemented based on this knowledge (Zaini, 2009). To understand the formation of knowledge culture, a comparison between the practices of developed countries, especially Western countries, and practices in Malaysia, needs to be made. This comparison provides an understanding of why the role of the library is central to information policies.

Bustamante (2007) and Soler (2007) correlate information policy development with the need to provide scientific and technical information and the establishment of public libraries by the government. However, Bustamante does not identify the need of scientific and technical information directly with the establishment of the national library.

Studies on the source of information have begun to expand in scope, but are still cantered on the scope of library and information services. This clearly shows the library as an institution is managing information that is highly relevant to the development and formulation of policies for information. At the time of being formed, the policy was related to the affairs of the library and information managed, as enshrined in the National Library Act 1972 (Act 80), namely to:

- i. Provide leadership and encourage partnership in library affairs;
- ii. Assist the Government in promoting education in the use and development of the national language;
- iii. Support research and investigations at the national level;
- iv. Provide facilities for information, for both pleasure and life, in communities;
- v. Contribute to the development of cultural relations with other communities; and
- vi. Invent or promote any services or other activities relating to library matters as, directed by the minister.

For this purpose, a set policy for the National Library covers Policy and Technology, Digitization Policy, Policy for Malay Manuscripts, Gift and Exchange Policy, Policy Publication Delivery System (CMS), Media Resource Policy, the Policy Advisory and Consultancy Services, Classified Document Management Policy, Policy Disposal of Library Resources, Policy Monograph Acquisition and Material Documentation and Other Printed Materials, Library Resources Conservation Policy, and Human Resources Policy.

Change in elements of information policy

The approach used to develop the information policy in this country does not follow usual practices, like those of developed countries. Development of information policies in developed countries is based on the information needs of the library as the main player. Information and communication technologies are simply tools that serve as a catalyst for the prominent use of information. Malaysia only sees need for policies when it comes to making information and for communications technology, which dominates the way organizations operate. Thus, the basis of information developed has an emphasis on information and communication technology (ICT). The Government considers ICT a significant positive impact on society and the nation. Library and information science is seen as less relevant to the progressive development. The Malaysia Institute of Microelectronic System (MIMOS) establishment in 1985 marked a starting point for a shift in the information policy, dominated by information and communication technology.

This dominance is further reinforced by the establishment of the National Information Technology Council (NITC), which has begun its Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) agenda and the National Information Technology Agenda (NITA). There was no representative from the library or any institutions in the information sector of NITC. Issues underlying the development of national information policy, including information society, were led by experts in the field of ICT.

ICT continues to be a catalyst for national development. A Multimedia Super Corridor project, stretching from Kuala Lumpur to Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, was completed on December 7, 2006, providing physical support for an information infrastructure of international standards. In addition, with the new administrative centre in Putrajaya, the Federal Government is equipped with the latest communication technology and sophisticated IT infrastructure (MP7, 1996).

In addition to IT infrastructure, the government is also strengthening the service sector, allowing them to be modern, efficient and competitive. This is being done by modernizing and integrating IT applications in the services sector, especially the public sector operations. IT development programs include a detailed Information Systems Plan developed to create databases for strategic and other decisions by facilitating the private sector's access to information.

This shift is accompanied by changes in regulatory mechanisms as well. The development of computer, communications and multimedia technologies not only changes the flow of information in organizational structures and operational changes, but also causes change in ownership control, administration and existing regulations. Therefore, a review should be done to ensure the rights and national securities of organizations and individuals are protected. At the same time, laws and regulations that inhibit the growth of IT need to be reviewed (MP7, 1996). However, the policies mentioned above cannot be implemented properly, due to bureaucratic delays. The NITC secretariat transferred from MIMOS to Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), the restructuring components of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the policy of restructuring the Ministry of Energy, Communications and Multimedia (MECM) was transferred to the Ministry of Energy, Water and Communications (MEWC), NITC, who coordinates the national IT policy, is seen as unable to act effectively (Marlia & Supyan, 2007).

Conclusion

A clear national information policy for Malaysia cannot be traced. Initially, the country had only libraries to handle basic information. However, the scope of the library's role was confined to getting information, and managing, maintaining and disseminating information, appropriate to the roles outlined by UNESCO and enshrined in the Library. The policy does not cover information on socio-cultural and economic aspects, such as in the others outlined in the PGI. The limitations of the scope of the information policy for national information are not exhaustive. In fact, the national information policy should be cross-disciplinary. Although the country gives priority to ICT for increased development of the country, it sidesteps the role of the library. Information science is not appropriate for understanding the information needs of a nation. Even the role of the library needs to be strengthened in line with developments at the global level. Libraries are key players in the development of an informed and knowledgeable society, not just as providers, but also as storage and information retrieval centres (Ruenwai, 2006). An informed and knowledgeable society cannot be established without a comprehensive integrated information policy.

The library and information science remains a significant element of the source of information, even though the current focus is on information and communication technologies for transforming the economy for national development. Thus, the library must put forward the Library Association as the lead role in developing an informed society, such as that done by the American Library Association (ALA), the leading information policy, as played by the Canadian Library Association (CLA), and increased the social system, as recommended by Pateman & Vincent (2010). As advocates by Smith (2002), no other sector of the information industry has the professional skills or perception to recognised the value of information or to leverage it. But one distinct problem lies in the lack of champion within the profession who can influence at the highest level.

Professional bodies in the area should take a wider approach to policy formulation, looking beyond the boundaries of institutions that provide and manage information.

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