

# **Rural Library as an Agent of Community Change: Beyond the Roles and Responsibilities of LIS Profession**

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## **Abstract:**

### Introduction

The Librarians Association of Malaysia (PPM) in collaboration with the National Library of Malaysia (PNM) has organized the 2022 Malaysian Libraries Annual Conference (PTPM) which was officiated by YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Haji Shukri, the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia (MOTAC) at Seri Pacific Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. The 2022 Malaysian Libraries Annual Conference was held online from 23 to 27 May 2022. The theme raised at PTPM 2022 is "No one left behind: Libraries as an agent of change" in line with the role of libraries as a community hub and gathering place for local history and heritage. A total of 35 presenters presented their papers in four (4) sessions and a total of 14 panelists held discussions on the field of librarianship in two (2) sessions. Also present at the opening ceremony event was YB Dato' Seri Ir. Dr Zaini Ujang, Secretary General, Ministry of Environment and Water, and several representatives of Library Association Leaders/Librarians from Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines.

### Purpose/Aim

In most rural communities, rural libraries play an important role in supporting the community's information needs. The rural library is a local center for the process of teaching, learning, experience sharing, knowledge sharing and is a focal point for children, housewives and the elderly. Through the provision of various programs and activities, this library has shown that it is capable of creating opportunities for the community. Therefore, rural libraries are in the best position to bring about positive community change.

At the Malaysian Libraries Annual Conference (PTPM) 2022 dated 27 May 2022, for two and a half hours (9.00am to 11.30am) a discussion session was held on the topic of Rural Libraries as Agents of Community Change. The session was attended by a total of eight panelists consisting of rural library staff from various states in Malaysia who discussed the role of rural Libraries as agents of community change. The session was held with the aim of understanding and recognizing the function and role of the rural library towards the community to the general public.

## Discussion

Among the topics discussed are the types of services provided by the rural library, and the type of users who always actively use the rural library. In addition, various interesting stories and initiatives that have been carried out by rural libraries been shared in ensuring that their existence remains relevant, especially to the underserved communities. Among other sharing in the discussion session are the challenges and obstacles faced in carrying out the role as a community change agent who at the same time has to carry out the responsibilities as an LIS profession.

## Key Findings

The role of a rural library officer is shared in detail by explaining how the role and responsibility they carry out to the local community. Apart from the role as an LIS profession, several other initiatives implemented to guide and help rural communities are carried out to ensure that library users can use the services and facilities provided to support lifelong learning. By carrying out the duties and responsibilities entrusted to them, to some extent the staff at the rural library can change the perception and actions of the rural community so as not to left behind their counterpart in the urban area. The way of thinking and behavior of local residents can also be changed indirectly when the time spent together in the library or when involved in programs that are often held. In addition, the importance of a library as an agent of community change was also raised in the discussion.

## Significance/implications

Some of the hopes and changes expected by the rural library staff towards the local residents were also shared in facing the challenges of the present. Among the needs and interests that must be there is the development of infrastructure that is in line with the sustainable development goals, proposed by the invited panel. This includes the needs of assistive technologies and social inclusion for rural communities. All libraries in Malaysia hope to be able to jointly continue their noble efforts in forming a knowledgeable and competitive society by implementing various programs to encourage reading. Cooperation from all parties is also highly expected from time to time. Rural libraries can indeed give positive implications to libraries as a community place and not just as a place to store scientific and reading materials.

**Key words:** Rural library; roles and responsibilities; agent of community change; LIS profession; community place.

**Paper type:** Panel Discussion

**Panel chairperson:** DR SAMSUL FARID SAMSUDDIN, Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya.

**Discussion Panel members**

Panel 1: Raihan Ishak @ Abdullah

Perpustakaan Desa Kampung Bechah Semak, Bunut Susu, Pasir Mas, Kelantan

Panel 2: Rizawati Ab Muni

Perpustakaan Desa Kampung Bukit Tok Ris, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu

Panel 3: Thamayanthi a/p Joseph

Perpustakaan Desa Perumahan Lima Kedai, Jalan Malinja 2, Perumahan Lima Kedai, Gelang Patah, Johor

Panel 4: Zulkifli Mohd Ali

Perpustakaan Desa Kampung Pulalu Rusa, d/a Balai Raya Kampung Pulau Rusa, Pekan, Pahang

Panel 5: Siti Suraya Mohd Amin

Perpustakaan Desa Kampung Pengkalan Samak, KM 22, Jalan Pengkalan Samak 6, Merlimau, Melaka

Panel 6: Haslinawati Hj Kamaruddin

Perpustakaan Desa Masjid Kariah Sikamat, d/a Masjid Kariah Sikamat, Sikamat, Seremban. Negri Sembilan

Panel 7: Cin Daa Hua Sing

Perpustakaan Desa Kubur Panjang, Kubur Panjang, Pokok Sena, Kedah

Panel 8: Suhana Abdul Rahman

Perpustakaan Desa PNM Titi Teras, Berdekatan 591 Mk E Titi Teras, Balik Pulau, Pulau Pinang