

PPM in the 80s and the new millennium – some reflections

Dato Zawiyah Baba (1985/86, 1986/87, 2001/03, 2003/05)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Persatuan Pustakawan Malaysia (PPM) or The Library Association of Malaysia this year celebrates its 60th anniversary from the year it was established in 1955. The history of PPM has been well documented elsewhere and has merited a comprehensive entry in the Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science. PPM has also been the subject of masters and doctoral thesis in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia and abroad. This article serves to highlight memorable events and developments in my years as President of PPM which covered two terms in the 1980s and another two terms two decades later as we enter the new millennium. This is to fulfil the request from PPM President Dr. Nor Edzan Che Nasir for former Presidents of PPM to share their thoughts about the Association in conjunction with its 60th anniversary this year.

1.1 Years as PPM President

I served as President of PPM for a total of four terms or 6 years. The first two terms were one-year term in the 1980s while the subsequent terms in the 21st century were two-year terms, following constitutional amendments in respect of the term of office approved at the AGM of 1985. I was first elected and served as President of (PPM) or The Library Association of Malaysia in 1984 – 85. I had served as Vice – President before then since 1976-1977 when Ch'ng Kim See was President, then in 1977- 78 and 1978-1979 when Mr. Edward Lim Huck Tee was President. In 1979 -80 when Puan Ragayah Eusoff was elected President, I remained as Vice-President, as at age 31, I was still considered too young to become President. I left for further studies in 1981-82 and on my return I served on Council again as Vice-President 1 when Puan Zaiton Osman was elected President in 1983-84. I was elected President in 1984 at the age of 35 years and served for a second term in 1985-86, the maximum allowed under the PPM Constitution. After that I continued voluntary work and helped to set up the Malaysian Reading Association and the University of Wales, Aberystwyth Alumni Club of Malaysia.

It was almost two decades later that I was persuaded by the late Hajjah Cik Shahar Banun Jaafar who was then Director-General of the National Library of Malaysia (PNM) and my immediate superior, to stand again for the office of President after Puan Rashidah Begum completed her two-year term in 2001. En. Mohd. Shariff Saad who was then Vice-President 1 also came to persuade me as he had signed up for a doctoral programme at Universiti Malaya and was not ready to take on the responsibilities of President. So that was how I came to stand for elections for the third time and was elected President again in 2001-2003. The PPM's Golden anniversary was coming up in 2005, so came AGM in 2003, I decided to continue in office to help lead preparations for the 50th anniversary celebrations. I served four terms and six years as PPM President: 1984 – 85, 1985 – 86, 2001 – 03 and 2003 – 05.

Coincidentally, the last two years of my term as President were also the last two years of my term as Director-General of the National Library of Malaysia and as a librarian. After my compulsory retirement, I was appointed Principal Fellow at the Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Thus began my foray into the research and academic world for the next eight years. However, I continued to be actively involved with the PPM. It was after I retired that I started receiving national, regional and international acknowledgements for services as a library professional. I was awarded the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Medal in 1997 at its Annual Conference in Durban, South Africa. This was followed by the PPM honouring me as 'Tokoh Pustakawan (*Outstanding Librarian*) 2008' and I was subsequently nominated for the CONSAL (Congress of South East Asian Librarians) regional library award at the CONSAL XII in Hanoi, Vietnam 2009. I was greatly honoured to be awarded 'Outstanding Librarian South East Asia – Gold Award' at the Congress.

2. PPM PRESIDENT IN THE 80S

I had been active in PPM activities since 1975, two years after joining government service as a Librarian at the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in 1973. I was the only librarian in the Ministry and always looked for opportunities to meet other librarians, especially from Special Libraries. Cik Shahar Banun Jaafar who was my senior in the National Library introduced me to PPM during the lottery project, where I helped to sell lottery tickets. From there, I started attending PPM events, including by the Special Libraries Committee. I met Agnes How at one such functions and she brought me to a meeting of the Committee of which she was a member. That was how I started with the Special Libraries Committee. I then served in ad-hoc Committees on Standards for Special Libraries as Honorary Secretary for a few years before I was elected as a Council Member.

I would say that my earliest mentors in PPM were Puan Ragayah Eusoff of the Bank Negara Library in the Special Libraries Committee and Miss Philomena Ng of the National Library of Malaysia through the PPM Ad-hoc Committee on Standards for Special Libraries. I was first elected as Vice – President in 1977 when Ch'ng Kim See was President and continued to serve as Vice-President to successive Presidents including Mr. Edward Lim Huck Tee and Puan Ragayah Eusoff. I left for further studies in UK in 1981 – 82 and after my return I was elected Vice-President at the 1983 AGM. When Puan Zaiton Osman finished her term as President in 1984, I stood for election and was elected President for the 1984-85 session.

2.1 PPM President 1984-85

Members of the PPM Council of 1984-85 session were close friends and worked well as a team. Zaiton Osman was the Immediate Past President whilst Noor Aini Osman was Vice President I and Laila Hassan Vice-President II. Kartini Nasrul Haq was elected Hon. Secretary and Aizan Ali the Hon. Treasurer. We had senior librarians such as Datin Rugayah Rashid, Puan Zainab Abdul Kader and Puan Badilah Saad, En. Ibrahim Kassim, Puan Kalsom Ismail, Puan Shahaneem Mustafa (now deceased), and En. Kamal bin Daud as Council members.

The go-to venue for PPM events those days was the Rumah Universiti of Universiti Malaya. PPM AGMs were held there for years and so were almost all of its significant meetings, even

workshops and seminars. It was small and cosy and had all facilities needed by a small association like PPM. It even had accommodation for a limited number of guests. It had catered for a good number of PPM's activities. When PPM was offered Secretariat space at the new National Library building a few years after it started operations there in 1993, PPM AGM and Council and Committee meetings then moved to the National Library.

The PPM did not have a permanent secretariat at the time. It rented premises in Kuala Lumpur where secretarial work would be carried out by a clerical Executive Secretary. But due to cost constraints, PPM gave up its secretariat office and the Executive Secretary, who was a clerical assistant at the time. The Hon. Secretary or a Council Member would volunteer to provide space for PPM office equipment at their own house. In this way the Secretariat moved almost yearly to whoever was willing to allow space in their homes for PPM use. In 1984 Puan Badilah Saad was kind enough to house PPM office equipment at her house. It was not the most satisfactory method of housing the secretariat but it did reflect the willingness and commitment of PPM Honorary Secretaries and Council Members to be inconvenienced for the sake of PPM. It was one of the factors which drove PPM to acquire its own building.

2.1.1 Fund-raising projects

Following the success of the Lottery Project, the PPM Building Fund was set up in 1976 and from then on, PPM's fund-raising activities focussed on contributing to the fund. Fund-raising was the responsibility of the Vice- President 1 and fund-raising activities were held every year. These include the ever-popular Book-Bang or sale of used books donated by the public or left-over stock from book sellers, several of which were held over the years. There were at least two Charity Film Premiers. The first, coordinated by Mrs. Molina Nijhar was under the patronage of Dr. Mahathir Mohamed who was Deputy Minister of Education. The second, coordinated by Puan Zaiton Osman was under Dato' Musa Hitam's patronage. A Tea Dance and a Fashion Show organised to raise funds were also well patronised.

In 1978, a novel idea of producing a play for fund raising was made possible with assistance of volunteers from American Peace Corps working in Kuala Lumpur. With Zawiyah Baba, PPM VP1 as producer, Patricia Lockwood, an advertising consultant at the Ministry of Information and a colleague of Zawiyah agreed to direct the play. An American Peace Corps couple who were teaching at the International School Kuala Lumpur helped to design and construct the sets. Local actors such as Mano Maniam in the lead role of the villain, Mary Arshad, headmistress of Garden school, Sukania Venugopal, an accomplished dancer, Sandakumari, a civil service officer as well as other local volunteers sacrificed much of their time to rehearse for months for the play. PPM members also contributed all manner of props for the play. The theatre production of the crime thriller by Emlyn Williams was successfully staged at the British Council theatre in Bukit Aman over a five-day period during which tickets at RM6.00 each were sold out. Apart from these, PPM also organised professional activities such as talks, seminars, workshops and courses which also indirectly helped to raise funds.

2.1.2 The Mount Kinabalu Expedition

During my first term as President, PPM undertook a 'climbathon' project to raise money for the Building fund. The Kinabalu expedition was indeed a most memorable project and was the first time attempted by the PPM. The idea was first mooted when I saw the peak of Mount Kinabalu in the distant horizon on a first visit to Kota Kinabalu in 1983, and it seemed to beckon to me. When my companion Joanna Kitingan and I went closer to the foothills in Ranau I felt even more inspired to reach the peak. It was 2 years later when I was President of PPM that a planned expedition to Mount Kinabalu evolved into the Climbathon project to raise funds for the PPM Building Fund. As President, I led participants which include 10 climbers from libraries in Peninsular Malaysia and 10 from libraries in Sabah. The much anticipated event took place on 5-10 March 1985. The climbers from PPM were Zawiyah Baba, President PPM and Expedition leader, Noor Aini Osman, VP1, Juhana Salim, Mazni Buyong, Maimunah Mohd Amin, Dr. Katni Kamsono Kibat, Ridzuan Wan Cik, Mustamam Mohd. Johan and a Malay Mail Journalist, Felicia Chong. The Sabah climbers were a much younger group from libraries in and around Kota kinabalu. The PPM Kinabalu expedition was highly successful as all 20 climbers made it to the highest peak of Kinabalu.

The expedition was followed by visits to libraries in Kota Kinabalu including the UKM Branch campus, Sabah State Library branches in Ranau and the Sabah Foundation Research Library. It also achieved its other objectives of integration between Sabah and Peninsular librarians, as well as an adventure programme for PPM members. One of the positive outcome of this project was the formation of the PPM Sabah Library Group with Puan Zahra Yaacob (now deceased), Chief Librarian of the Sabah Foundation Research Library as its first Chairman.

It was, however, less successful as a fund-raising project. This was due to the high cost of the project itself including air-fares, local transportation, accommodation, meals, as well as incidental climbing expenses including registration, fees for guides and porters. In addition, four of the climbers were eventually unsuccessful in securing the required RM5000.00 sponsor each. Nevertheless the project was able to contribute almost RM5000 to the building fund. A detailed account of the PPM Kinabalu Expedition entitled 'The Call of Kinabalu' by Zawiyah Baba was published in *Sekitar Perpustakaan*, the National Library of Malaysia journal in 1985. The article was reproduced by the National Library of Malaysia in their special publication '*Sebutir Mutiara, Selaut Bakti: penulisan terpilih Dato' Zawiyah Baba*' in 2005 in conjunction with my retirement from government service.

2.1.3 Reading project for youth

Apart from fund-raising projects, one of the most memorable reading promotion project organised by PPM was for youth in the Federal Territory. It was organised by PPM in cooperation with the Ministry of the Federal Territory, Information Department, Department of Youth, Culture and Sports. The project chaired by Puan Zaiton Osman was conducted in the form of workshops and presentations and was held from 1984 – 86. The workshops included information seeking skills, reading skills, drama writing and production as well as presentation skills. The organising Committee included Rosna Taib, Munisah Yusoff and Wong Kim Siong. Each module was conducted by experts in the relevant field. Information seeking skills was conducted by Zaiton Osman, Reading Skills workshop by Dr. Safiah Osman, Drama writing and production skills by Shuhaimi Baba and M. Nasir Jani. The

project culminated in the final presentation by the different groups which took place at the City Hall's *Panggung Bandaraya*, a lovely old purpose built theatre. 30 youths, including male and female, who had completed fifth form but were not in institutions of higher learning, were selected and stayed throughout the project. They clearly enjoyed the different skills they were learning and the brilliant group presentations they gave demonstrated the success of the project.

2.1.4 Amendments to the Constitution

The proposal to look into the purchase of a building for PPM particularly required significant constitutional changes in its objectives as it did not allow for PPM to invest its money, acquire assets or enter into fund-raising activities. The objectives of the PPM had to be amended to legitimise fund-raising activities and well as investment in stocks and shares carried out by PPM and to enable it to consider the purchase of a building, and applying for a bank loan. These amendments were discussed and approved at the AGM of 1984/85 and subsequent AGMs when the need arose such as the appointment of trustees. Another significant amendment proposed at the 1985/86 session when I was President was in respect of the term of office of the President, increasing it from one to two years. It was felt that one year was too short a time for a newly elected President and Executive Committee to accomplish any concrete projects and it was agreed that the constitution be amended to extend the term of office of the Executive Committee to two years. This resolution was duly approved by the AGM in 1985/86 and took effect from 1986. The late Puan Sri Rugayah Abdul Rashid, then Datin Rugayah was the first two-year term President in 1986 -1988.

3. PPM President 1985-86

I continued for another year as President in 1985 – 86 as work on acquiring a building had begun and we had to see it through. Zaiton Osman continued as the Immediate Past-President. Noor Aini Osman was re-elected VP1 and Laila Hassan as VP11 with Norlela Nor Mohamed as Hon Secretary and Abdul Hamid Ismail as Hon Treasurer. Council members included Datin Rugayah Rashid, Puan Badillah Saad, En. Ibrahim Kassim (now deceased). So I had more or less the same committed and dedicated team to work with.

3.1 Acquisition of building in Shah Alam

The acquisition of the PPM Building in Shah Alam was the major focus in 1985/86. It was noted at the AGM in 1984 that funds in PPM's fixed deposit account had exceeded 1 million. Apart from this, PPM held shares in several blue chip companies. It was agreed that PPM set up a committee to explore the possibility of fulfilling its main fund-raising objective of acquiring a building of its own to use as Secretariat office, meeting room and training rooms. The committee comprised of the main office – bearers of the Council. Abdul Hamid as Honorary Treasurer was tasked with the job of identifying suitable buildings for consideration. A two-storey shop lot in Section 17 Shah Alam was agreed to as it met the space requirements, location in a well-developed and accessible area and most important, affordable. Once this was agreed upon the committee comprising of PPM Council office bearers met almost every other day, usually at Puan Zaiton's house in Bangsar for a few months to prepare proposal for the purchase of the building including costings of alternative

methods of acquiring the building, whether by outright purchase as against payment by instalments, to present before an Emergency General Meeting (EGM) for approval.

The EGM approval was necessary due to the fact that the large sum which needed to be spent from the building fund exceeded the amount the Council was authorised to spend. The paper also included the suitability of the building for PPM's use. Puan Zaiton generously provided the use of her dining room for our meetings with Mak Nah (now deceased) her long-time domestic helper providing endless supply of '*teh tarik*' and '*pisang goreng*'. It was agreed that the ground floor of the shop lot would be rented out to suitable business activities. This would exclude restaurants, mini-markets and other 'messy' activities. Abdul Hamid enlisted the assistance of his dear wife Fauziah (Ogy) who worked in Mesiniaga to calculate the mode of payment and interest rates. The purchase of the building was made possible essentially due to the commitment and diligence of Abdul Hamid who worked out all the necessary details to be presented to the EGM. It was agreed that outright payment will be made in cash as we did not want PPM to be burdened with issues of defaulting.

Once details have been worked out, we prepared to obtain approval of PPM members in order to disburse the sum of RM20,0834.00 needed to pay the Perbadanan Kemajuan Negeri Selangor (PKNS) for the building through the EGM. PPM Council called for an EGM twice as the first one did not meet the necessary quorum. At the second EGM, approval was obtained and PPM Council proceeded with the purchase of the building. A Board of Trustees was formed following approval at yet another EGM, and Tuan Syed Salim Agha and Puan Rohani Rustam were duly appointed. At the PPM AGM in 1986, outgoing President Zawiyah Baba announced the acquisition of the building and the project was handed over to the newly elected President Datin Rugayah Rashid and the incoming PPM Council of 1986/88.

4. The Millennium Years

As PPM entered the new millennium in the year 2000, it underwent a significant change in its name from Persatuan Perpustakaan Malaysia (Library Association of Malaysia) to Persatuan Pustakawan Malaysia (Librarians Association of Malaysia). This was intended for PPM to focus on professional development of its members as librarians rather than on libraries. Constitutional amendment to effect the change of name had been approved at the AGM of 1998 under the stewardship of Cik Shahar Banun Jaafar and took effect during the term led by Puan Rashidah Begum, who was President in 1999 – 2001.

4.1 PPM President 2001-2003

As explained in the introduction above, I stood for election for 2001-2003 session as President of PPM and was unopposed. I took over from Puan Rashidah Begum when she completed her two-year term. Vice-President 1 was Putri Saniah Megat Abdul Rahman and Puan Siti Zakiah Aman was Vice-President II. The Honorary Secretary then was Cik Nafisah Ahmad who is the present Director-General of the National Library, assisted by Mr. Azli Abdul Rahim. Puan Chin Loy Jyoon from the National Library was Hon. Treasurer assisted by Cik Rajeswary Ramalingam. Encik Hasbullah Atan was a Council Member in charge of social activities. Puan Maimunah Kadir was the dynamic chairman of the Medical Libraries

Committee, En. Mohd, Sharif Mohd Saad, Fatimah Jusoh, Jamaliah Aini Manah, Norma Darus and Salful Yazam Mat.

It was a very active year for PPM as we had an excellent and very hard-working team. A number of important initiatives including the Library Excellence Award begun during this term. That was also the year PPM organised a delegation to IFLA in Boston, USA, and in 2003 to IFLA in Buenos Aires, Argentina. We conducted a good variety of courses and workshops for library personnels, all of which were well attended and helped to keep the association afloat. The late Dr. Mohd Sharif Saad in particular was very active in organising training programmes and at one stage I felt, as President, I was forever signing Attendance Certificates for participants of courses he organised.

4.2 PPM President 2003 -2005

I was re-elected as the PPM President for the 2003-2005 term which proved to be most eventful for the association. The main consideration for standing for election for the next two years was the forthcoming Golden Jubilee of the PPM and LAS in 2005. Preparation for the 50th Anniversary began in 2004 soon after the AGM in April. A number of new initiatives were planned for 2005, not least of which was the Library Excellence Award, the Presidents of PPM Talk Series, appointment of five Honorary Life Members from among non-librarians who made significant contributions to the library profession, a joint conference with Library Association of Singapore which shared the same anniversary as PPM and a Gala Dinner to celebrate the Golden Jubilee where the Excellent Library Awards were to be presented. PPM was also joint organisers for the Sixth International Conference on Asian Digital Libraries (ICADL) in 2004.

4.2.1 The 6th International Conference on Asian Digital Libraries (ICADL) 2003

PPM was co-organiser with National Library of Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for the 6th ICADL themed "Digital Libraries: Technology and Management of Indigenous Knowledge for Global Access" which was held for the first time in Kuala Lumpur on 8-12 December 2003. The Conference, held at the Prince Hotel was officially opened by the Hon. Minister of Education, YB Tan Sri Dato' Seri Musa bin Mohammad. More than 300 participants, with 80 from overseas including the United States, Britain, China, India, Taiwan, Indonesia and Singapore attended the conference. The proceedings of the conference was published by Springer and distributed to all participants before the conference.

4.2.2 PPM Library Excellence Awards 2005

The PPM Library Excellence Award was mooted in 2002 was debated and approved by AGM in 2003. The preparation of the criteria for selection and paper for presentation was mainly due to the hard work and research done by Hasbullah Atan. It was agreed that it would be a Biennial award with the prize money of RM10,000.00 sponsored by Access Dunia and a trophy provided by PPM. The call for nominations went out in 2004 and panel of judges Dato' Zawiyah Baba, PPM President as moderator, were appointed the same year. Members of the panel were Puan Khoo Siew Mun, Prof. Dr. Szarina Shakir and Datin Siti Mariani Omar. The panel members visited libraries which had been shortlisted in two categories, Large and

Medium and Small libraries. The results were announced at the 50th Anniversary or Golden Jubilee Gala Dinner held at the Ballroom of Hotel Istana. The guest of honour was the Deputy Prime Minister YAB Dato' Seri Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak and his wife YABhg Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor. The winner of the first award for the large libraries category was the Perpustakaan Tuanku Sultanah Zanariah of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Skudai, Johor. Pustaka Negeri Sarawak was awarded a Special Award for Excellence and Creativity in Library Promotion and the Bank Negara Malaysia Resource Centre also merited a special award for Library Transformation. While there was no winner for the Small Library category, the Institute for International Languages Library won a special award for Resourcefulness.

For the following two years, the number of categories was increased from two to three to accommodate Medium-sized libraries in addition to the Large and Small libraries. Access Dunia was generous enough to increase the prize money to accommodate the new category. Since 2005, the award was scheduled to be held every two years.

4.2.3 PPM – LAS Joint Conference 2005

The PPM-LAS Joint Conference was a major event held to commemorate PPM's Golden Anniversary. The theme of the conference was "The Visible Librarian in the Virtual World" which was held at the Hotel Istana, Kuala Lumpur on 6-8 April 2005. Dato' Zaiton Osman was the Chairman of the Organising Committee. The conference was a highly successful platform for discussion of issues of current concerns to the library profession. Attended by librarians from Malaysia and Singapore, the conference also saw the participation of the President of the South African Library Association (LIASA) Mr. Tommy Mathe and the representative of President of the Indian Library Association (ILA) Mr. Muttaya Koganuramath who were invited to present papers at the conference. The invitations to LIASA and ILA were to reciprocate the respective invitations for PPM President by LIASA at their Annual Conference in 2003 and from the ILA for their Golden Jubilee Conference in 1984. The Conference Papers were published as Proceedings by PPM in 2005, edited by Zaiton Osman and her team from the Universiti of Malaya Library. A well subscribed exhibition on library and information service products were also held in conjunction with the conference.

4.2.4 Appointment of 5 Honorary Life Members

In conjunction with its 50th anniversary, PPM took the opportunity to recognise the support and contribution of individuals who are not librarians, to the library profession. At that time, the only Honorary Life Member of PPM was Mrs Hedwig Anuar. Based on recommendations by a search committee, PPM Council agreed to confer the following five individuals as Honorary Life Members of PPM:

- i) YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Mohd. Rashdan bin Baba – Chairman of the National Library Advisory Board
- ii) YBhg. Tengku Dato' Azman Sharifudeen – Director-General of MIMOS Malaysia
- iii) Y.Bhg. Dato' Halim bin Shafie – Director-General of MAMPU

- iv) Y.Bhg. Prof. Dato Dr. Ibrahim Bajunid – Dekan, Fakulti Ilmu Kemanusiaan, Univ. Tun Abdul Razak (UTAR)
- v) Y.Bhg. Prof. Dato' Dr. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin – Director, Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

All the five recipients had facilitated the development of the National Library and national library development through their respective good offices. The recipients received their Honorary Life Membership of PPM from the Deputy Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak at the Gala Dinner to celebrate PPM's Golden Anniversary on 6th May 2005.

4.2.5 Gala Dinner

The PPM Gala Dinner organised by Puan Siti Zakiah Aman, Vice-President II PPM and Director of Policy and Corporate Affairs Division, NLM and her team was a huge success. It was held on 6th May 1980 at the Istana Hotel. The glittering dinner was graced by the YAB Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and his wife YABhg. Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor. The guest of honour also officiated the opening of the AGM, which was held the following day and presented awards for the Excellent Libraries as well as special awards for different categories. The five recipients of the Honorary Life Membership also received their certificates and tokens of appreciation from the Deputy Prime Minister. The Deputy PPM gave a profound speech congratulating PPM on its 50th Anniversary and reminded librarians that they should play a more pro-active and visible role in promoting reading among the population, especially those in the rural areas. A beautiful and large golden anniversary cake was cut by the DPM and his wife with PPM President Dato' Zawiyah Baba. YABhg. Datin Seri Rosmah graciously entertained dinner guests with a lovely song by Kris Dayanti. A band provided entertainment for the whole night with well-known singer Aishah as the guest vocalist. PPM 50th Anniversary Night was certainly a night to remember and was indeed a memorable way to usher in the golden anniversary.

4.2.6 PPM Mission in Aceh after the Tsunami

While the planning for the golden anniversary were in full swing, an unexpected calamity struck South East Asia and the Indian Ocean on 24 December 2004. An earthquake measuring at 9.0 on the Richter scale near Banda Aceh, resulted in a giant tsunami which devastated Banda Aceh in North Sumatra and severely destroyed parts of Thailand, North West coast of Malaysia, Sri Lanka, southern coast of India and Madagascar. The PPM received a report and video on the damage to Libraries in Aceh and appeal for help from the Indonesian Library Association. The matter was discussed at the 2005 AGM where PPM agreed to send a special delegation comprising of Dato' Zawiyah Baba, Puan Rohani Rustam and Encik Hasbullah Atan to Banda Aceh in August 2005 to assess the damage to libraries and gather information on the types of assistance needed for immediate recovery and long-term redevelopment. A videographer sponsored by Pesona Pictures Sdn. Bhd. also joined the team to record the visit. Aceh was the worst affected region following the earth-quake and suffered the worst devastation by tsunami in the memory of mankind. The PPM Aceh Mission team visited affected libraries and reading centres and met with key librarians and staff of affected libraries in and around Banda Aceh and submitted a full report to PPM by

December 2015. The work of the PPM Mission team continued under the External Aid Committee, of which I was Chairman, over the next five years until 2010.

My involvement with IFLA continued after my term as President ended in June 2005, mainly through the Round Table for the Management of Library Associations (RTMLA) where I presented reports and updates on the PPM's mission to Aceh after the tsunami. The first time I presented an oral report about Aceh was at the open session on the aftermath of the tsunami presented by the Director-General of the National Library of Sri Lanka. During question time, Puan Putri Saniah who was the PPM President then urged me to give an impromptu oral report on PPM's mission to Aceh. The response to the oral report I presented was overwhelming. IFLA delegates were anxious to know about what happened in Aceh as there was very little news coming through the international news channel due to Aceh being a closed province under military rule for many years. Members of international aid agencies came to me asking for information and requested the report of our first visit to Aceh in August 2005, just weeks prior to IFLA in Oslo that year. A full report in English was subsequently submitted to IFLA and also to the Indonesian Library Association as well as CONSAL member countries. The report was also submitted by PPM to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism Malaysia. I was also invited to present a report on Aceh after the tsunami to the IFLA Committee for National Libraries.

In the meantime, UNESCO Regional Office in India also appointed me as a Consultant to prepare a blueprint for redevelopment of public libraries in Sri Lanka after the tsunami in November 2005. With assistance from staff of the National Library of Sri Lanka, I surveyed the damage to libraries in the southern coastal areas of Sri Lanka which were the hardest hit. I met with many National and Local government agencies and attended the meetings of the Special Committee to look into the damage to libraries and plan for restoration and redevelopment. The report and recommendations were submitted to UNESCO in July 2006.

The tremendous interest shown by IFLA members at Oslo encouraged us to propose the setting up of a special fund to help the work of the PPM Mission to Aceh. The PPM Aceh Libraries Fund was launched at the AGM in 2006 and a report was presented at IFLA RTMLA meeting. PPM received on-the-spot contributions from librarians attending AGM that year as well as from libraries in Malaysia during the year. The American Library Association, American Agricultural Libraries Association and the Canadian Libraries Association made generous donations to the fund which sustained PPM's work in Aceh until 2010. A book documenting the work of the PPM Aceh Mission team in Aceh entitled *Aceh Reads: The PPM Mission in Aceh after Tsunami* authored by Zawiyah Baba, Rohani Rustam and Hasbullah Atan was published by PPM in 2011.

5. PPM in 1980s and the New Millennium

An obvious and glaring difference in the scenario in the 80s and the new millennium was of course the absence of internet and use of computers in libraries generally, let alone by the PPM. All official correspondence or communication was typed using a typewriter. When there was a clerical Executive Secretary, all official correspondence would be typed by her. When there wasn't one, PPM volunteers would have them typed by their own office staff or by themselves. It does mean a great deal of travelling to and fro to the secretariat office for

typing and printing of letters or duplicating circulars. There was considerable dependence on clerical staff as not many people owned a typewriter. Without mobile phones or fax machines, communication naturally took a longer time and needed earlier planning. Despite these obstacles, we managed to get things done.

5.1 PPM/LAS Joint Committees

In the 80s, PPM had close relationship with Library Association of Singapore through two bilateral joint projects namely the PPM/LAS Joint Liaison Committee and BILCO (Standing Committee on Bibliographical and Library Cooperation) which met at least once a year in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore alternately. This was due mainly to its historical origins. These bilateral committees more or less fizzled out in the 1990s as Singapore pursued its *Singapore 2000* master plan to transform its libraries for global impact. In the meantime, PPM aligned itself to the national *Vision 2020* plan and transformed itself and the nations' library and information services for a fully developed nation. We more or less went our separate ways until the Golden Anniversary of the Library Association of Malaysia and Singapore in 2005 where we got together and had joint celebratory programmes. There have been efforts to organise more bilateral activities in the form of seminars and attendance at celebratory events since then. I certainly hope that PPM and LAS will continue to explore ways that both associations can cooperate or collaborate. It would be such a pity to let our long-standing ties simply fade into oblivion.

5.2. PPM Secretariat at PNM

A new development in respect of the secretariat for PPM took place after the completion of the National Library building in Jalan Tun Razak in 1992. There had been complaints previously that the Secretariat in Shah Alam was inconvenient as most office bearers and council members lived in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya. Circa 1996, the National Library offered PPM the use of its former game room for the National Library Club as its use. No rental was charged and in fact the water and electricity bills were also absorbed by PNM as these utilities were centrally controlled and metered. PPM readily accepted the spacious room for use as its secretariat office.

With the transfer of the secretariat to the National Library building, both floors of the PPM building in Shah Alam was available for rent. The higher rental came in handy to defray other administrative costs of running the Association including hiring of a full-time Executive Secretary and modern office equipment and facilities. PPM was able to hire a library science graduate who was a PPM member as full-time executive secretary to run the secretariat office and carry out PPM Executive Council's decisions. With these new developments fundraising projects for PPM became a thing of the past and PPM was able to focus on professional activities which also contributed to PPM's healthy financial status.

5.3 Proposed new building for PPM

With its secretariat ensconced at the National Library since mid-1990s, PPM in the new millennium years was also able to consider acquiring a more accessible new building for its secretariat office, board room and multipurpose room. With AGM approval, it was successful in selling off the building in Shah Alam to use as capital. Under the leadership of the late Dr Mohd Sharif Mohd Saad as President, PPM AGM of 2013 also approved Council's resolution to acquire a new building or premises. However, this resolution has yet to be implemented and would take a high degree of commitment and hard work on the part of the PPM President and Executive Council to accomplish.

5.4 Travel packages for international conferences and book fairs

In addition to the above-mentioned activities PPM certainly became more outgoing and adventurous in its activities. It organised more travel packages to make it more affordable for librarians to attend international conferences especially IFLA and CONSAL. PPM packages for IFLA included Boston, USA (2001), Buenos Aires, Argentina (2003), Oslo, Norway (2005), Seoul, South Korea (2006) and Durban, South Africa (2007). Similarly PPM travel packages were organised for all CONSAL congresses including in Brunei Darussalam, Manila, Philippines and Saigon, Vietnam. In addition to conferences and seminars, travel packages was also extended to Book Fairs, especially London, Frankfurt, Delhi and Jakarta. These travel packages not only enabled more librarians to attend and participate in overseas conferences and book fairs, but they also helped to raise funds for the association.

Expeditions were also another interesting diversion from PPM's courses and seminars. One expedition was organised to Taman Negara (National Park) in Pahang 21-23 May 2005 and earlier in 2003 to the Mulu Caves in Sarawak, the biggest cave in the world. A PPM workshop held in Kuching with the Sarawak Library Group was followed by the Mulu Caves expedition. The Chairman of the Board of Pustaka Negeri Sarawak Tan Sri Hamid Bugo and CEO of Pustaka, Puan Rashidah Bolhassan accompanied the PPM delegation.

Personally, I felt by far the most interesting and worthwhile package organised by PPM was for IFLA in Buenos Aires in 2003, a wonderful destination for a conference. In addition, Malaysia Airlines those days had a three-day stopover in Cape Town, South Africa, another breathtaking destination. It gave us time to meet with local librarians and visit important libraries in Cape Town. We also managed to reach the world renowned tourist destinations such as the Table Mountains, Cape of Good Hope, Penguin Island and Ostrich Farm as well as to shop for gem stones as well as other fascinating South African memorabilia. Travel packages were certainly popular among librarians in the first few years of the 21st century.

6. Participation in IFLA and CONSAL

6.1 IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions)

With PPM organising travel packages to international conferences, an increasing number of Malaysian librarians began participating in IFLA, CONSAL and other regional conferences.

Formerly, only heads and senior officers of major libraries were able to attend these conferences. Travel cost was one of the obstacles. However, with the travel packages, the cost became considerably less and affordable to mid-level librarians as well. More and more institutions were becoming aware of the need for librarians to attend regional and international library conferences and provide for this in their annual budget.

Malaysian librarians have been fairly active in IFLA since the time of J.S. Soosal, DEK Wijasuriya, Edward Lim Huck Tee, Mariam Abdul Kadir and Shahar Banun Jaafar (now deceased). More recently, librarians actively serving on IFLA Committees include Rashidah Begum, Zawiyah Baba, Mohd. Sharif Saad, Ku Jo Bee and Putri Saniah Megat Abdul Rahman. Others served as corresponding members including Nafisah Ahmad, Siti Aishah Sheikh Kadir, Rashidah Bolhassan and others. Paper presentation at IFLA were also mainly by those mentioned above as well as teaching faculty from the various library schools in Malaysia, and librarians from special and public libraries.

My first stint at IFLA was in 1995 in Istanbul, Turkey, as a postgraduate research student at University of Wales Aberystwyth. There was a pretty strong representation from Malaysia and Malaysians were involved in a number of IFLA committees including the Standing Committee for National Libraries, IT and also RASCAO. I remember posing with Mariam Kadir, Shahar Banun, Zaiton Osman and Rashidah Begum in our beautiful batik kebaya and baju kurung after the opening ceremony.

I became active in IFLA after my second participation at IFLA in Boston in 2001. PPM had organised a travel package, so was well represented. But I had arrived a week earlier to attend an IFLA pre-conference workshop on library planning at North Western University. I recall the now infamous September 11 destruction of the Twin Towers which happened barely 2 weeks after I returned from the US, having spent another week in Washington D.C. after the conference. I had arrived early in the morning on the 22-hour Malaysia Airlines direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to New York. In the taxi approaching the city I asked the taxi driver whether the tall buildings I saw in the horizon was the Empire State Building. "No Ma'am" said the Jamaican driver. "Those are the World Trade Center Twin Towers ". That was the first and last time I saw the Twin Towers.

As Deputy DG of the National Library of Malaysia in 2001, I was more assured of attending the annual world library conference, the most important event in the library professional calendar. This encouraged me to participate actively in the IFLA Standing Committee for National Libraries. At the first meeting I attended I introduced myself and reported on developments in NLM relevant to the meeting's agenda. I attended other sessions at the conference which was of interest to me and raised questions or commented on papers presented. The following year, there were vacancies in the National Library Committee and I put my name up for election and was voted in. From then on I became an active full-fledged member of the Committee.

I was usually requested by the Committee to conduct surveys for the Asia Oceania region and report on international projects undertaken by the National Library especially regional workshops on leadership, conservation and development planning. I presented a paper every year at IFLA from then on until my retirement from the National Library. I also spoke

at a forum at the Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL) meeting. The National Library of Malaysia had a very high profile then and was awarded funding for a regional conservation project from UNESCO in 2004. In that year too, I was elected Deputy Chairman of the annual Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL), in which more than 80 countries were represented. That was the highest position I was elected to in IFLA before retiring in 2005. It was truly a great honour for me to be awarded the IFLA Medal at the IFLA Congress in Durban, South Africa in 2007 from IFLA President Alex Byrne.

With many more Malaysian librarians attending IFLA through the PPM organised travel packages, it is hoped that there would be a corresponding increase in participation in IFLA Committees and also for paper presentations. Unfortunately, the increase has been negligible especially among younger librarians. PPM and major library institutions should perhaps provide guidance on how Malaysian librarians can make the most of their attendance at IFLA conferences and play a more active and visible professional role. A session devoted to participation in IFLA was once organised by PPM where senior librarians who attend IFLA regularly including Rashidah Begum, Zawiyah Baba and Putri Saniah Megat Abdul Rahman shared their experiences at IFLA. Such sessions should perhaps be held more regularly and could be included as part of the PPM travel package organised.

6.2 CONSAL (Congress of Southeast Asian Libraries)

CONSAL remains a very important platform for regional library cooperation and PPM has played an active role in CONSAL Board Meetings and conferences as well as all its projects and activities since its inception in the 1970s. Malaysia hosted the triennial Congress in 1984 and 1996 and is due to play host again in the near future. I have attended a good number of CONSAL Executive Board meetings and conferences over the years since 1984. Country members of CONSAL has increased gradually from the original five countries since its inception to ten including Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Kampuchea in keeping with the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) membership. In addition, Timor Leste has also been invited as an Associate Member since its independence. Malaysia has had a pretty successful run with the Outstanding Librarians of South East Asia Awards with two of its nominees Dato' Zaiton Osman (Brunei Darussalam, 2002) and Dato' Zawiyah Baba (Hanoi, Vietnam, 2009) were awarded the coveted prize. With its increased membership, the duration for Malaysia's turn to host the triennial CONSAL conference would now inevitably take longer. After the 2015 Congress in Bangkok, Myanmar has agreed to host the next CONSAL in 2018.

7. Managing Two National Portfolios

In December of 2001, I was appointed Director-General National Library of Malaysia. I had earlier been elected President of PPM and was leading two national associations at the same time. I was not the first to hold these positions simultaneously as my predecessors, Datin Mariam Abdul Kadir and Cik Shahar Banun Jaafar became President of PPM when they were holding office as Director-General of PNM. The burden of responsibility was enormous but I enjoyed my work thoroughly and was fully committed to both that it became less of a chore and more a source of excitement and inspiration.

There were several factors which helped me carry out the responsibilities of PPM President while I was Director-General. The fact that the PPM Secretariat was in the National Library building helped a great deal especially when it came to chairing PPM meetings and attending to PPM administrative matters. It cut so much hassle with travelling and saves time and cost. Furthermore, constitutional amendments in respect of the Hon. Secretary at the end of the 20th century meant that the position was filled by appointment from among elected Council members. I was fortunate that Cik Nafisah Ahmad from the National Library was among them and duly appointed her as Honorary Secretary. The elected Honorary Treasurer Puan Chin Loy Jyoon was also a staff of the National Library. Close proximity with these two important and very capable officers made my work that much easier and helped me cope with the burden of responsibility.

I also had a strong team with the PPM Council especially in the two years leading to PPM's golden anniversary, which was why we were able to undertake so many significant activities for the celebration. The Vice-Presidents Dr Mohd. Sharif and Puan Putri Saniah and all office-bearers and council members pulled their weight. Those heading key projects such as Dato' Zaiton Osman and Puan Siti Zakiah Aman were worth more than their weight in gold. Being able to draw from the National Library's talents also contributed to the success of many PPM projects for the 50th anniversary.

Taking charge of two national associations by PNM Director-General had positive benefits as although PNM had a myriad of other national objectives, PPM and PNM shared similar objectives in furthering the development and advancement of the library profession and library professionals. In this role, they complement one another. There were certainly closer cooperation in organising regional and international activities such as conferences and workshops and national IT programmes. Although there was pressure internally for the space occupied by PPM Secretariat to be taken back for the National Library's own use, PPM members among PNM staff have managed to convince their colleagues of the long-term benefits of continuing of allowing PPM to maintain its headquarters at the National Library.

When the Director-General of the National Library is also President of PPM this is a clear indication that PPM has the full support of the National Library. Access to its facilities such as the auditorium, lecture rooms and premises was much easier and facilitated many PPM activities. With PPM as strategic organising partner, it enabled fees to be charged for programmes which needed to be more cost-effective.

Although the National Library Acts provide for its leadership role in library matters, a single focal point for leadership in library matters would certainly avoid discord or conflicting positions regarding the profession. It would certainly facilitate decision making and ensure that national issues pertaining to librarianship is brought to the attention of the relevant authorities. This is particularly so in matters pertaining to scheme of service, library standards, training and education of librarians, conservation and networking of digital library services. It would also facilitate PPM's inclusion as a voice in national policy making bodies as well as international bodies and organisations such as UNESCO and ASEAN.

There is a need for PPM and PNM to synergise in galvanising efforts of all libraries and librarians in a nationwide campaign to inculcate the reading habit and information skills

which could raise the profile and impact of libraries especially among the public and government. I recall the message from the Deputy Prime Minister at PPM's Gala Dinner for librarians to play a more pro-active and prominent role in promoting the reading habit and skills among the population. Libraries generally tend to regard reading promotion as the responsibility of the National Library and public libraries and to some extent the special libraries in the public sector. Not all university and special libraries have annual programmes for reading promotion, but there were notable exceptions such as the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Library. University and other academic libraries especially in the private sector mostly feel that their clientele are already sufficiently literate and thus focus on information literacy within their student population as a separate programme. Furthermore they do not have a presence in the rural areas where the main targets of reading campaigns are based. Thus far, the lack of synergy in the national reading campaign is still prevalent. The library community as a whole need to galvanise their efforts and take the opportunity to make a really major impact through a nationwide reading and information literacy campaign. With the Director-General of PNM as PPM President, there is a better chance of achieving this in the near future.

It is vital that all library institutions particularly PPM and PNM maintain a close and strong professional relationship for the development of the profession and library professionals. The strength of the profession depends on strategic alliance and close collaboration between PNM and PPM especially in human resource development. PPM should perhaps not rely on PNM representation through the general elections alone as this may not ensure one that is at the required level and capability. Perhaps it is time for PPM to consider providing in its constitution a permanent representation for the Director-General of PNM on PPM Council as an ex-officio member. This would acknowledge the importance of the National Library as a strategic partner in providing better and more beneficial programmes for members and the profession.

8. Urgent and Outstanding Matter for PPM

An important and urgent task for both PPM and PNM is the registration of library and information professionals in the country. The large and increasing number joining the profession every year is sadly not reflected in the PPM membership which by guesstimate is currently less than half the number practicing. This partly explains the apathy on the part of many librarians towards PPM. A large membership is imperative in building up the strength of the profession for professional impact and development. It is also vital for mobilising of human resource and volunteers if PPM were to host major international conferences such as IFLA and CONSAL. Registration of librarians has been discussed at PPM Council and AGMs since the 70s and committees formed to look into a Librarians' Act. The Philippines and Indonesia library associations have achieved it. So we have models to look at within ASEAN. With ever-increasing numbers graduating from library schools, the library community has potential strength in numbers of but this needs to be impacted in PPM membership. Registration of library and information personnel has to be revitalised and pursued seriously. An all-out membership drive is needed to recruit increasing numbers in the information and library profession in order to make a bigger impact nationally and globally.

9. Conclusion

I have enjoyed working in a voluntary capacity with the PPM and have been fully committed to it since my early days as a librarian. In fact it had been so much a part of my professional life and where I made my best and lasting friends. Relying entirely on volunteers, both in the Executive Council and also in running its activities had its challenges and is often trying, or even thankless, but with commitment and conviction in the value of the work that needed to be done, we managed to overcome most obstacles. Comradeship from like-minded members also provided motivation, support and camaraderie which help overcome challenges and difficulties and to even enjoy the task at hand. PPM has managed 60 years of its existence through the spirit of volunteerism of its members and have made tremendous achievements. A lot still remains to be done to strengthen the association. The registration of librarians for one, is a long outstanding issue, and the acquisition of a new library building is another. Both will need a high degree of commitment, determination and hard work from senior and young members working together in order to be accomplished.

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